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FOREWORD

In the belief that it is desirable to make the products of an active workshop in the history of art available, the students of the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University bring out the first volume of *Marsyas*. In carrying out this project, they chose an editorial board from among their members, and contributions were limited to works produced by students while enrolled at the Institute.

The editors wish to express their gratitude to the Faculty of the Institute and to its Chairman, Walter W. S. Cook, for their invaluable assistance, to the students for their enthusiastic support, and to the subscribers for the confidence implied in their response. Finally, they extend their appreciation to Doris Duke Cromwell, without whose generosity this undertaking would have been impossible.

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ROMAN ELEMENTS IN THE SETTINGS OF
THE SYNAGOGUE FRESCOES AT DURA*

by

Elizabeth Hill

The recently discovered frescoes in the synagogue at Dura-Europos provide an excellent opportunity to study the pictorial art which must have flourished in the eastern extremity of the Roman empire.¹ These frescoes, dated between 245 and 256 A. D., present a well preserved cycle of Jewish Old Testament stories.² Numerous and interesting are the problems which they raise. From the art of what period and region has the chief executant drawn his greatest inspiration? What is the iconographical significance of these scenes? These questions merit consideration. Tentative and most contradictory solutions have been proposed. Until a complete and detailed publication of the frescoes is available, a final resolution of these and many other problems is impossible. In the meantime, it is possible to make some observations on one aspect which is of particular interest. These observations result from a comparison of the settings of the frescoes with Roman works of art.

An examination of the conception and arrangement of the setting throughout the series reveals that not one, but three, methods of representation are employed. The first is used in only a few instances, such as *Moses before the Burning Bush* (fig. 1), and the scene tentatively labelled *Moses receiving the Tables of the Law*.³ Of the three, this group is the closest to classical art in its representation of landscape, and in its use of figures placed before simplified landscapes which include a horizon line. Greatly reduced though it is, this method of presenting a world close to our own visual experience certainly derives from the classical concept of figure and space. The Pompeian fresco of *Herakles and Telephos* (fig. 2), a Hellenistic work preserved in a copy of the first century A. D., embodies such a classical point of view.

The second group, which includes a few more examples, is represented by such scenes as the *Anointing of David* (fig. 3), the *Sacrifice of the Prophets to Baal*, and *Elijah raising the Widow's Son*.⁴ Again

the action takes place along one line, a line parallel to the picture plane. There is no indication of depth and no regard for action taking place in the background. The distinction between this group and the first lies in the fact that in it there is no representation of landscape. Neither a horizon line nor a suitable support for the feet is indicated. It is as though a curtain had been dropped directly behind the row of actors. This deployment of figures on a neutral ground with the emphasis on one foreground plane exists in contemporary folk art. Examples just preceding the date of the execution of these frescoes are the Elysium painting in the tomb of the Gens Octavia in Rome, 220 A. D.⁶ or the group of twelve men in a lunette from the tomb of the Aurelii of 240 A. D. (*fig. 4*).⁷

By far the most frequent system of space representation is that employed in the third group, in such scenes as the *Ezekiel* cycle (*fig. 5*),⁸ the *Exodus* (*fig. 6*), and the so-called *Miriam's Well* (*fig. 7*).¹⁰ In contrast to the two preceding groups, these scenes all include much landscape detail; trees, buildings, and rivers are represented. Furthermore, some of the action is relegated to the background. Foreground and background are treated with equal interest. But, oddly enough, no greater feeling of depth is achieved here than in the two previous groups. This seeming paradox may be explained by the fact that visual illusion has been abandoned in favor of greater clarity in the narration. In the *Priesthood of Aaron* (*fig. 8*),¹¹ a temple set within an enclosure is seen far above the crenellated wall which surrounds it. The Red Sea, which flows vertically in the *Exodus* scene (*fig. 6*), defies the laws of even that limited "perspective" used elsewhere in ancient painting.¹² The ground rises so sharply in the *Ezekiel* scene (*fig. 5*) that three bodies lying adjacent to one another appear to be suspended, one above the other.

The conclusion that there are three principal methods of presenting narrative in the Dura frescoes seems evident. The very fact that three

distinct systems are followed substantiates the theory that these frescoes must have been inspired by book illustrations drawn from different sources.¹³ Inasmuch as no homogeneous style is employed throughout the frescoes, this hypothesis is far more satisfactory than the more common assumption that the artist at Dura was inspired by a uniform tradition from one region or period.

The third group of scenes, since it is the largest and includes the greatest amount of detail, supplies the best opportunity for a study of the setting. Analogies to the method of representation in this group are not difficult to find. Roman historical reliefs from the second to the early third century A. D. provide examples of the style which must have inspired these frescoes. Unfortunately, no works of major importance have survived which are related to the frescoes at Dura in style and immediately precede them in date. Despite the fact that the earliest examples precede the frescoes by approximately one hundred and fifty years, these Roman historical reliefs indicate a growing tendency in imperial narrative art which finally reached a Roman outpost like Dura. Disregard for a logical recession may be found in the deluge scene from the column of Marcus Aurelius (*fig. 9*),¹⁴ where the bodies of the victims are ranged one above another in much the same manner as the three figures in the *Ezekiel* scene at Dura (*fig. 5*). Another instance of this treatment on the same column occurs in the scene showing a messenger entering the gateway of an enclosure where the emperor stands (*fig. 10*). Judging by the comparative sizes of the emperor and the messenger, the two are not far apart. Yet the emperor is placed so high above his servant that his body from head to waist is clearly visible above the gateway, just as Aaron appears above the wall at Dura (*fig. 8*). The vertically flowing river of the *Exodus* (*fig. 6*) at Dura also has many counterparts on the column of Marcus Aurelius (*figs. 11, 14*).¹⁵ A study of Roman folk art proves that this system of arrangement continues into the third century. On the funerary monument of Hermes, dated 230 A. D.,

space is completely disregarded; here one figure is placed directly above another.¹⁷

Given this tendency in both Roman historical relief and the Dura synagogue frescoes to superimpose motives for the sake of greater clarity, one may seek further analogies. A closer study of this new attitude toward spatial representation reveals that the artist at Dura was not always consistent. Sometimes he treated objects in a map-like manner, as if he were looking directly down upon them. The Red Sea in the *Exodus* scene (*fig. 6*), for example, is in an absolutely vertical position. Yet, within the sea, the bodies of the drowning Egyptians are not seen from above, but from the side. The column of Marcus Aurelius provides an exact analogy: a river (*fig. 14*) is shown in a map-like manner. At its fork, there is a tree which, like the Egyptians in the fresco at Dura, is seen directly from the side. On the same column, another vertically flowing river occurs on which there are boats seen in profile (*fig. 11*).¹⁸

To a certain extent, this same combination of bird's-eye view and profile projection is to be found in the representations of the *Priesthood of Aaron* (*fig. 8*) and the corresponding scene of the column of Marcus Aurelius (*fig. 10*) compared above. This duality appears in the treatment of buildings as well. *Niriam's Well* (*fig. 7*) at Dura will illustrate the point. The circular opening of the well appears almost round, but again this bird's-eye view is mingled with the limited linear perspective of classical art; the side of the well is shown clearly and completely. Both Trajan's column and the arch of Septimius Severus employ this same system.¹⁹

In the frescoes, the sharply rising ground upon which the action takes place precludes any designation of a horizon line, since the land extends to the uppermost limits of the frame. Occasionally, a very high horizon is indicated, as in the *Exodus* scene (*fig. 6*), but it is never

an important factor in the picture; indeed, one is hardly aware of its existence. This lack of emphasis upon the horizon line occurs in Roman historical reliefs of the preceding age.²⁰ It is particularly apparent on the column of Marcus Aurelius where the roughened strips placed under the feet of the figures should not be interpreted as an attempt to define the horizon, but merely as devices to supply a suitable base for the feet.²¹ The disregard for the horizon is even more apparent on the arch of Septimius Severus. Not only are there projecting strips of ground for the feet, but the entire background is roughened to the uppermost extremity of the scene, in order to indicate clearly that this is all ground, above which no sky whatever appears.

But the analogies are not limited to the general concepts of space rendering which here and there have produced strikingly similar arrangements. They may also be found in specific details of the setting. Generally, in the works revealing this tendency, the setting contains only those elements which are absolutely necessary for the story. There are examples of mountains, trees, rivers, buildings, and necessary minor accessories, but these are infrequent and there is never a superfluous building or mountain. This same economy of detail is found in Roman historical reliefs of the Antonine period. On the column of Marcus Aurelius, many episodes have no setting whatsoever. A scene may be composed solely of fighting men. An occasional river, in one instance a forest, and barbarian huts make their appearance, but infrequently. The reliefs of Septimius Severus contain still fewer accessories. There are no mountains; two small rivers, remnants of two trees, and a number of buildings are sufficient for the narrative.

Further points of comparison between the frescoes of Dura and Roman historical reliefs appear in the types and methods of presenting buildings. In his use of the dual point of view, the artist at Dura approximates the methods of the artists of the columns of Trajan and

Marcus Aurelius. When an enclosure is represented in the same manner used on the arch of Septimius Severus, the surrounding wall is clearly seen from the side, yet it does not obscure even the feet of the figures within. The artist also prefers to show equally the two adjacent sides of a rectangular building. Disregarding perspective completely, he uses no diminution whatsoever in the *Priesthood of Aaron* (fig. 8) and in the *Temple of Solomon* (fig. 12).²² This same method is not uncommon in Roman reliefs. It is used, for instance, for the temple on a relief in the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome (fig. 13).²³

At Dura there is no fresco in which a building or wall is shown in two-point perspective. Either the facade of a temple alone appears, as in *Miriam's Well* (fig. 7) and in the *Ark in the Land of the Philistines*,²⁴ or the method just described is used to render the edifice with a complete plane projection of two adjacent sides. Roman artists did not always make such an effort to achieve consistent frontality, but some instances of it do occur. At the beginning of the column of Marcus Aurelius, a company of soldiers files through two archways which mark the extremities of a bridge.²⁵ The file of soldiers is seen directly from the side, but the arches are in an almost frontal position. Occasionally, on this same column, the artist needs to represent a wall receding diagonally from the picture plane. But, if there is a door in such a wall, he shows it frontally, instead of following the line of the wall into the background (fig. 10). The artist at Dura is even more consistent in his preference for such frontality than the sculptors of the Roman historical reliefs.

The size of the buildings in the Dura frescoes is never scaled to the people. Aaron, who stands behind a crenellated wall, is considerably higher than the wall itself (fig. 8) and it would be impossible for him to pass through the doorway below. In the same manner, the wall and entrance to the right of Pharaoh in the *Infancy of Moses*²⁶ and the wall behind Moses in the *Exodus*²⁷ are too small for the figures. Examples of

this same lack of coordination between man and building abound in Roman art. On Trajan's column it is a common practice. A soldier stoops before an entrance to an enclosure slightly more than half his height.²⁸ On the column of Marcus Aurelius, a man standing behind a barbarian's hut towers above it.²⁹ Similar incongruities occur in the central building of the northwest panel on the arch of Septimius Severus.

A lack of proper scale also marks the construction of the buildings. Usually it is obvious that the wall or the temple is composed of large blocks of stone. But the relation of the individual block to the size of the completed building is fantastic. That is, in order to show clearly and simply how the building was constructed, the artist paints blocks which are far too large to give any impression of reality. The walls in the *Exodus*, the *Priesthood of Aaron* (fig. 8), or the *Infancy of Moses* all display this tendency.

Here, again, direct analogies are plentiful in Roman monuments. Examples³⁰ may be chosen at random: a round fortified area on Trajan's column, a crenellated wall on the column of Marcus Aurelius (fig. 10), a building on the arch of Septimius Severus. At Dura the occurrence of this device, a well established practice of Roman relief sculpture, cannot be explained as mere coincidence. Only a direct historical connection can supply the explanation.

In only one example at Dura does a building interfere with the action of the story, in the *Priesthood of Aaron* (fig. 8). In general, it is placed carefully in a corner or high above the main action so that there will be no possibility of overlapping. This is a tendency which the artists in Rome employed for many years before the execution of the Dura frescoes. On Trajan's column there is a still greater use of architecture, but it is placed well in the background whenever possible.³¹ On the column of Marcus Aurelius, tents, walls, and buildings are avoided if possible, and in one scene after another, only men appear.

Where an edifice is necessary, it, too, is relegated to an unoccupied corner.³² The reliefs of Marcus Aurelius, some of which are now on the arch of Constantine, others in the Palazzo dei Conservatori, all exhibit this preference for placing architecture well out of the field of action so that there will be little overlapping.³³ Most of the structures on the arch of Septimius Severus are of the open type. When the artist does use a row of buildings, he places them in a corner, far from the field of action, as on the southwest relief.

Is the building type used at Dura derived from a local style of the East or West? Aside from the tents of *Miriam's Well* (fig. 7), only two forms of structures appear in the Dura frescoes: crenellated walls and temples. The crenellated wall occurs frequently on the Roman columns, so that it may safely be assumed that at Dura this element could easily have been derived from a western prototype. The reliefs of Marcus Aurelius in the Palazzo dei Conservatori provide good examples of the Roman temple type (fig. 13),³⁴ where the Roman artist represented a Corinthian temple, usually tetrastyle. The *Temple of Solomon* (fig. 12) at Dura is the nearest in style to the Roman examples. It is a typical Corinthian tetrastyle temple. The irregularity of the intercolumniation, a characteristic found on Roman coins,³⁵ is merely a device to show the great bronze doors plainly. The remaining temples are also Corinthian and have the same large interval between the two center columns of the facade. In the *Priesthood of Aaron* (fig. 8), on the other hand, columns are omitted, in order to show the doors or the interior of the temple without obstruction. Again, in the use of a temple type which has no relation to any eastern tradition or to Jewish iconography, there is a definite connection with the practice of Roman imperial art which cannot be accidental.

The trees at Dura are almost identical with those used in Roman reliefs.³⁶ Comparing a tree from the river scene on the column of Marcus Aurelius (fig. 14) with a mountain tree in the *Ezekiel* scene,³⁷ one finds the same twisting trunk breaking into small branches which are easily

hidden by a few large leaves, so large in relation to the trunk that only seven or eight are necessary to give the impression of a tree in full leaf. There is the same relation in size between trees and men as exists between buildings and men. Like the buildings, the trees are used only when a suggestion of a forest is necessary, and only where they will not interfere with the action of the story.

There is only one other instance of plant life in the frescoes at Dura; in the *Infancy of Moses* the river is lined with reeds treated in a very free and natural manner. Their occurrence here may be explained by the fact that they are necessary to the story. In one instance on the column of Marcus Aurelius, a few stalks of wheat indicate the presence of a field bordering the river;³⁸ again, farther on, scattered corn stalks inform us that the soldiers are passing through a great field.³⁹ But these are rare examples.⁴⁰

The rocky ground of the *Ezekiel* mountains (*fig. 5*) and the rough mountainous ground found occasionally on the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius may be compared. A broken surface is used on the column of Trajan.⁴¹ The chisel has taken shallow chips out of the stone to create an area of broken lights and shadows, giving the effect of hammered metal. The artist at Dura has achieved this same impression of flickering light and shade in his two-dimensional medium by building up the mountain with irregular, rounded areas which gradually shade from dark at the bottom to light at the top.

The general treatment of water is the same in Roman historical reliefs and in the frescoes at Dura. Where the artist desires to show a stream flowing into the depth of a scene, he uses the device already observed; the river is shown in a map-like, vertical position. In other instances on the column of Marcus Aurelius⁴² and in the second stream of the *Exodus* scene (*fig. 6*), or in the *Infancy of Moses*, the water flows parallel to the picture plane. In the actual treatment of water, the historical

reliefs offer no analogy. For example, the streams on the two columns are turbulent, and the ripples on the water are treated in a flowing, wavy manner, arbitrarily surrounding objects in the stream, with no regard for natural movement (*fig. 11*).⁴³ It is rather in two-dimensional art that an analogous convention to that at Dura must be sought. The same dark, straight, parallel lines, set on a lighter field, that denote water in the Dura frescoes, appear in the mosaic of Eros driving two Psyches, of the second or possibly the third century A. D., in a villa at Daphne.⁴⁴ Since it is very possible that the Dura frescoes were inspired by a two-dimensional art, it is not surprising to find the artist using a convention employed in painting or mosaic rather than one used in relief. Furthermore, this analogy with an Antiochene mosaic may point to the channel by which the basic concepts of Roman imperial monumental art were guided to the Dura frescoes.

In this discussion, similarities to western Roman examples have been cited continually since they readily present themselves. However, since these frescoes were created in a remote eastern corner of the empire, it is only proper that the question of local influence be considered. For many scholars consider that this local style is an important factor, and cite the type of clothing worn, the particular sort of narration employed, and the figure style, all of which are beyond the scope of this study of the setting of the frescoes.

When analogies are drawn between the trees of the frescoes and the type of trees used in the grave paintings of South Russia,⁴⁵ one may conclude that such a parallelism is a bit strained. The type of tree in the Dura frescoes is characterized by curving trunk, simple branches, and a few large leaves, a type which was shown to be similar to the trees on the Roman historical reliefs. The South Russian trees, on the other hand, are of quite another sort: the trunk stops abruptly at the crotch⁴⁶ and, instead of two or three simple branches rising from that point,

as many as six narrow lines spring out. Instead of a few large leaves, the foliage is designated by an arc of green, which is either composed of separate round spots, one at the end of each thin branch, or of a fusion of these spots. This is very different from the method of the artist at Dura.

It would be impossible to seek a prototype for the frescoes without a study of the figure style and the clothing in the first two groups. On the basis of setting, a minute factor in their arrangement, little can be concluded. It will be observed that, in the third group of frescoes, more frequent analogies have been found to the style of the column of Marcus Aurelius than to that of any other monument. The study of the setting alone reveals that the third group must have been inspired by a style which existed approximately fifty years prior to its execution, and was intimately connected with, or inspired by, official imperial art. It remains to be determined whether the line of influence came directly or indirectly from the Roman imperial art of the historical reliefs to the synagogue at Dura, or whether the two stemmed from a common source.

Since Dura was a Roman army post, and since many details of these frescoes accord with Roman art, it is logical to believe that the artists of Dura must have drawn from this source rather than from a local one. If the theory that the frescoes were inspired by book illustrations can be further substantiated, the Roman source of style will be more certain, since texts undoubtedly emanated from the large cities of the empire where an imperial style existed.

NOTES

- * I am greatly indebted to Dr. Karl Lehmann-Hartleben for proposing this subject for study and for his many suggestions and criticisms.
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 2. Rostovtzeff, *Excavations*, pp. 311, 329.
 3. *Ibid.*, Pls. LI, XLVII.
 4. Swindler, M., *Ancient painting*, New Haven, 1929, fig. 484; Herrmann, P., *Denkmäler der Malerei des Altertums*, Munich, 1904-1931, Pl. LXXVIII; Curtius, L., *Die Wandmalerei Pompejis*, Leipzig, 1929, figs. 2-5.
 5. Rostovtzeff, 'Die Synagoge von Dura', *Roemische Quartalschrift*, XLII (1934), Pl. XXII; *idem.*, *Excavations*, Pls. L, XLVII.
 6. Wirth, F., *Roemische Wandmalerei*, Berlin, 1934, Pl. XXXVIII.
 7. *Ibid.*, Pl. XLIXa.
 8. Wischnitzer-Bernstein, R., 'The conception of the resurrection in the Ezekiel panel of the Dura synagogue', *Journal of Biblical literature*, LX, 1 (1941), 43-55; Aubert, *op.cit.*, fig. 3.
 9. Rostovtzeff, *Excavations*, Pl. LIII.
 10. Ehrenstein, T., *Fresken der Synagoge von Dura-Europos*, Vienna, 1937, fig. 7.

11. Du Mesnil du Buisson, R., 'Une peinture de la synagogue de Doura-Europos', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LXXVII, 2 (1935), 195, fig. 2.
12. Panofsky, E., 'Die Perspektive als symbolische Form', *Vortraege der Bibliothek Warburg* (1924-1925), 258-330; Garger, E., 'Zur spaet-antiken Renaissance', *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, VIII (1934), 1-28; Richter, G., 'Perspective, ancient, medieval and Renaissance', *Scritti in onore di Bartolomeo Nogara*, Citta del Vaticano, 1937, pp. 381-388.
13. This suggestion has been made in lectures by K. Lehmann-Hartleben.
14. Petersen, E., and others, *Die Marcus-saeule*, Munich, 1896, Pl. XXIIIa; Wegner, M., 'Die kunstgeschichtliche Stellung der Marcus-saeule', *Jahrbuch des deutschen archaeologischen Instituts*, XLVI (1931), 61-174.
15. Petersen, *op.cit.*, Pl. CXa.
16. *Ibid.*, Pls. XVIIb, XXXb, XLI.
17. Wirth, *op.cit.*, Pl. L.
18. Petersen, *op.cit.*, Pl. XLIa.
19. Lehmann-Hartleben, K., *Die Trajanssaeule*, Berlin, 1926, Pl. XVIII, 33; Strong, E., *La scultura romana*, Florence, 1923-26, Pls. LX, LXI; photographs by Mr. Erling Olson.
20. Garger, *loc.cit.*
21. E.g., Petersen, *op.cit.*, Pl. XIb.

22. Du Mesnil du Buisson, 'Un temple du soleil dans la synagogue de Doura-Europos', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LXXVIII, 2 (1936), 85, fig. 1.
23. Strong, *op.cit.*, fig. 162.
24. Rostovtzeff, *Excavations*, Pl. XLVIII.
25. Petersen, *op.cit.*, Pls. IX, X.
26. Aubert, *op.cit.*, fig. 12.
27. Rostovtzeff, *op.cit.*, Pl. LII.
28. Lehmann-Hartleben, *op.cit.*, p. 132, Pl. XXXIV, 63.
29. Petersen, *op.cit.*, Pl. XXVIIIb.
30. Lehmann-Hartleben, *op.cit.*, p. 132, Pl. XXII, 43.
31. E.g., *ibid.*, Pl. XLVI, 100.
32. E.g., Petersen, *op.cit.*, Pl. XXIb.
33. Strong, *op.cit.*, figs. 157-161; L'Orange, H., *Der spaetantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens*, Berlin, 1939, Pls. XLVI, XLVII.
34. Strong, *op.cit.*, figs. 157, 163.
35. See Brown, D. F., *Temples of Rome as coin types*, New York, 1940, p. 19. (*Numismatic notes and monographs*, no. 90).
36. Lehmann-Hartleben, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

37. Aubert, *op.cit.*, fig. 3.
38. Petersen, *op.cit.*, Pl. XXXb.
39. *Ibid.*, Pl. LIVb.
40. There is a relief from the Hadrianic period in the National Museum in Rome, which depicts soldiers walking through reeds in a manner very similar to that at Dura. Lehmann-Hartleben, *op.cit.*, p. 130, n. 4; Paribeni, R., 'Incrementi del museo nazionale romano', *Bolletino d'Arte*, VI (1912), p. 177, fig. 8.
41. E.g., Lehmann-Hartleben, *op.cit.*, Pl. VI, 2.
42. Petersen, *op.cit.*, Pl. IX.
43. *Ibid.*, Pl. XLI.
44. Stillwell, R., and others, *Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, Princeton, 1938, II, Pl. XXXVI (XLVIII E); Hanfmann, G., 'Notes on the mosaics from Antioch', *American Journal of Archaeology*, XLIII (1939), 240.
45. Rostovtzeff, *Dura*, p. 119.
46. Rostovtzeff, M., *Antique decorative painting in southern Russia*, St. Petersburg, 1914, II, Pls. LXXVI, LXXVIII (in Russian).

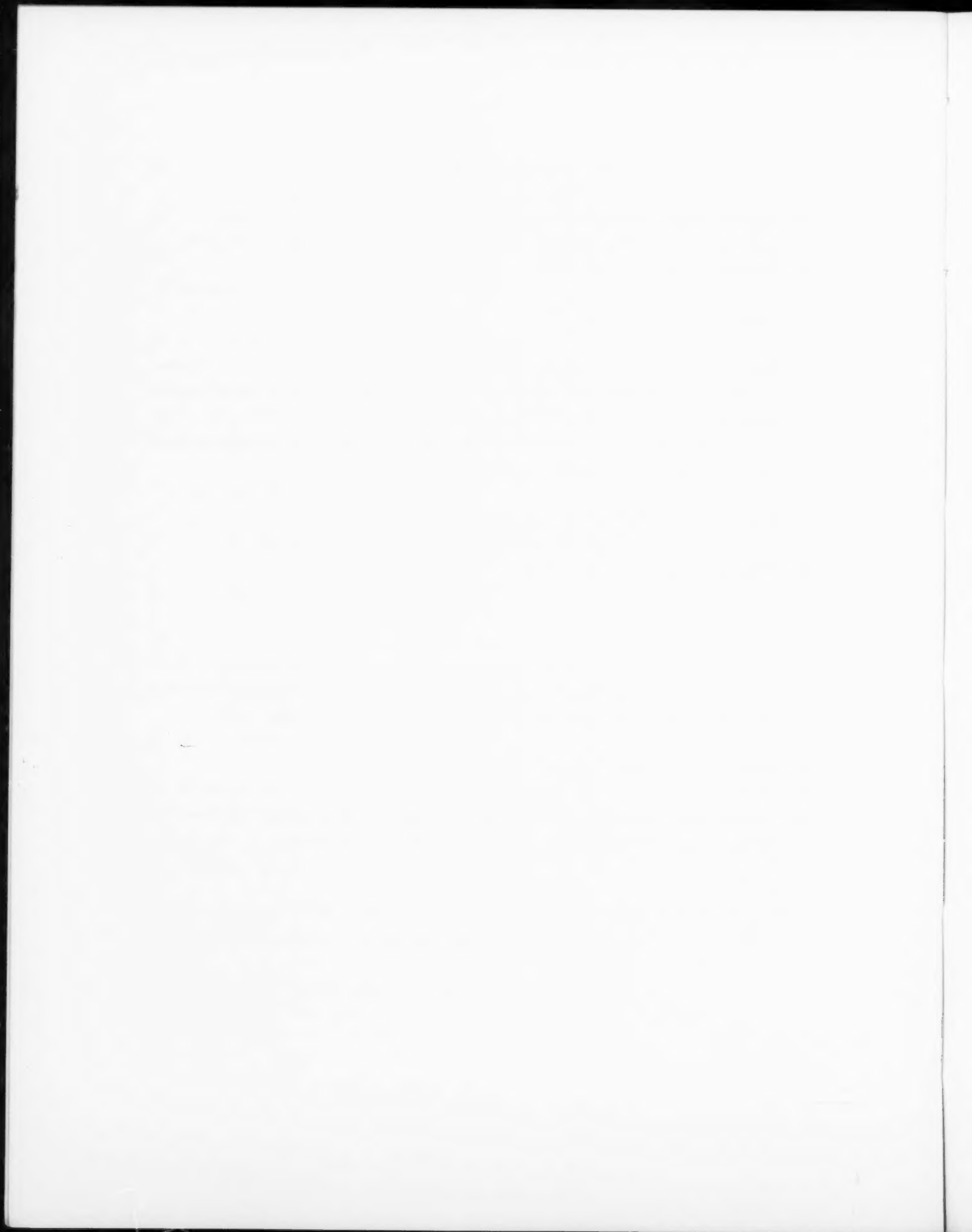




Fig. 1. Moses before the Burning Bush,
Dura, Synagogue.



Fig. 2. Herakles and Telephos, Naples,
National Museum.



Fig. 4. Lunette, Rome, Tomb of the Aurelii.



Fig. 3. Anointing of David, Dura, Synagogue.



Fig. 5. Ezekiel cycle (detail), Dura, Synagogue.

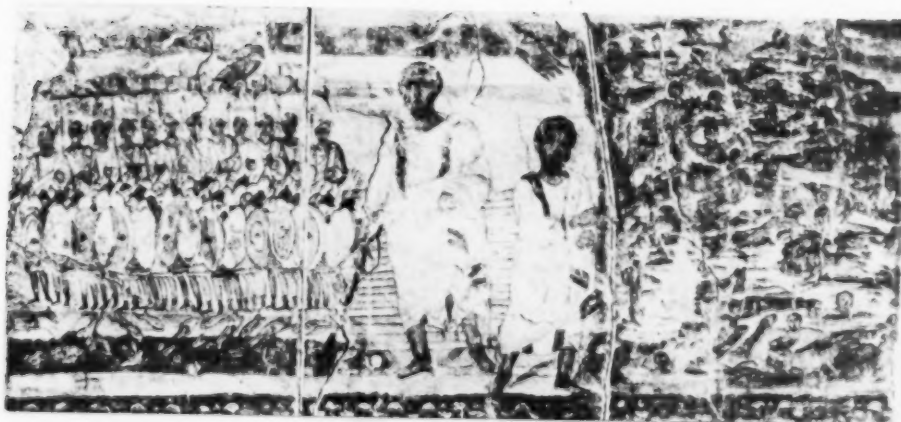


Fig. 6. The Exodus (detail), Dura, Synagogue.

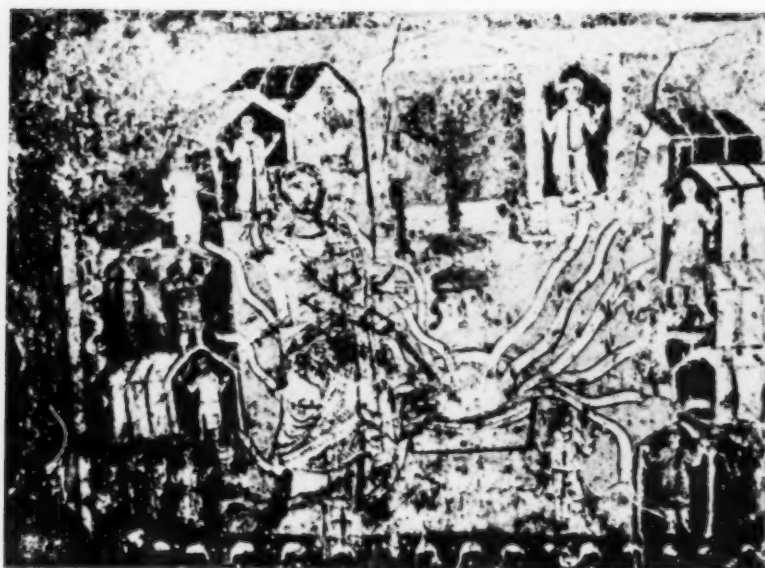


Fig. 7. Miriam's Well (?), Dura, Synagogue.



Fig. 8. Priesthood of Aaron, Dura, Synagogue.



Fig. 9. Column of Marcus Aurelius
(detail), Rome.

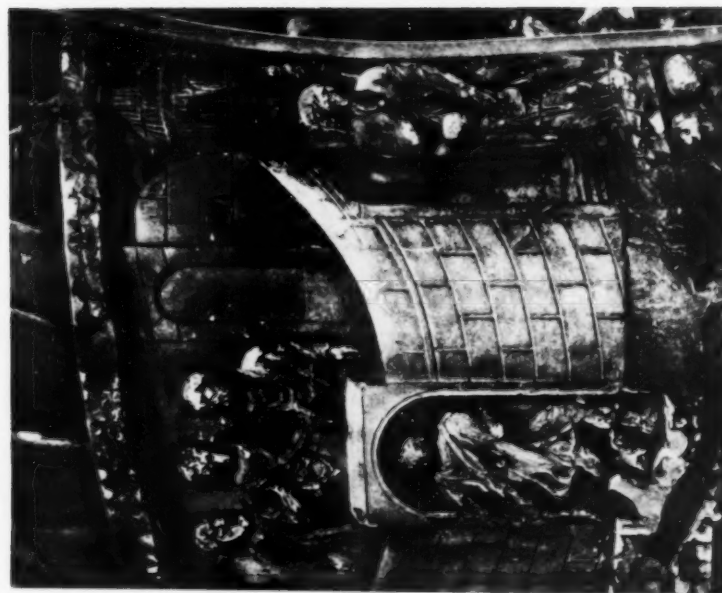


Fig. 10. Column of Marcus Aurelius
(detail), Rome.

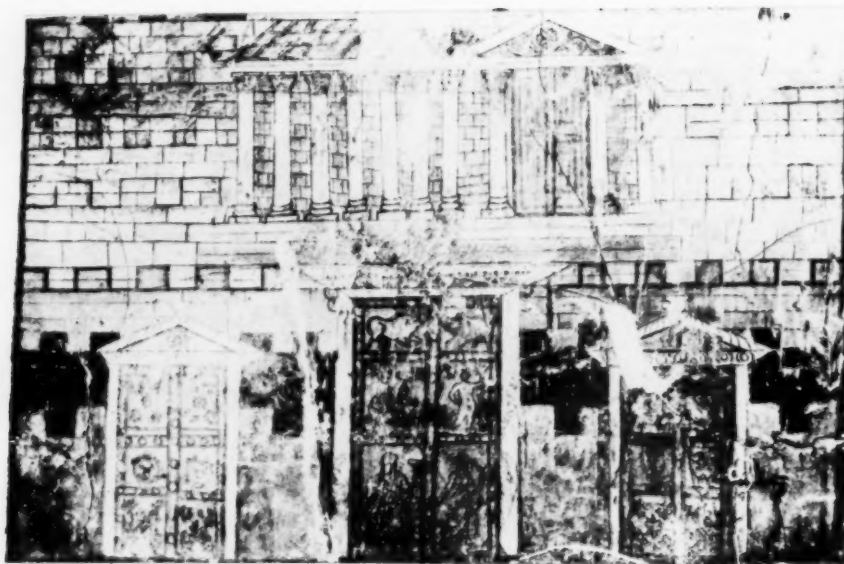


Fig. 12. Temple of Solomon, Dura, Synagogue.



Fig. 11. Column of Marcus Aurelius
(detail), Rome.



Fig. 13. Relief of Marcus Aurelius, Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori

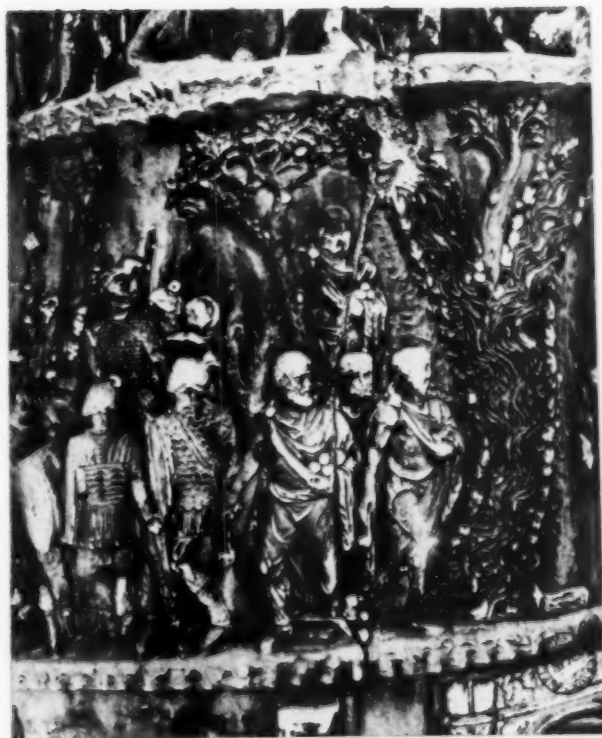
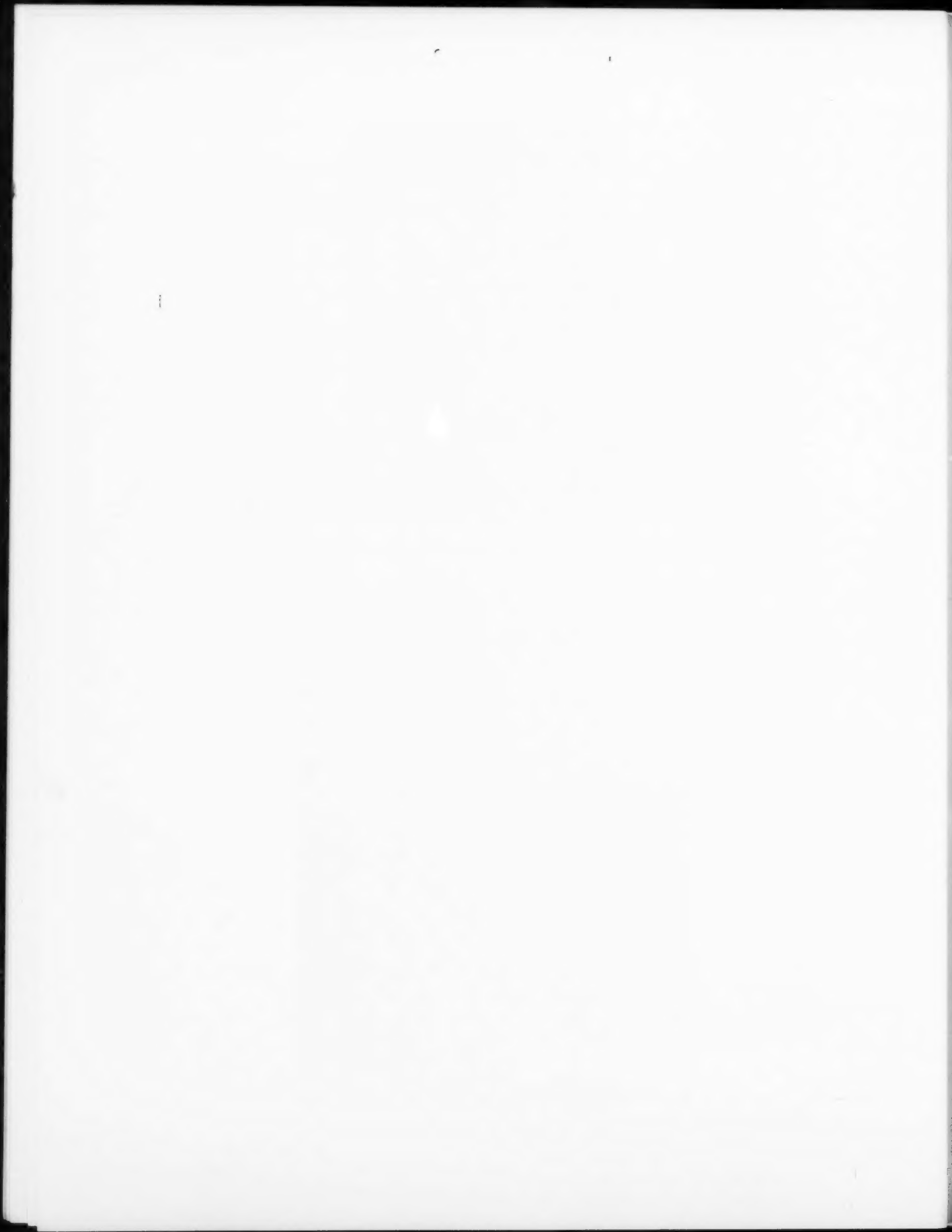


Fig. 14. Column of Marcus Aurelius (detail), Rome.



A LATE ANTIQUE ENGRAVED PLAQUE FROM EGYPT*

by

Donald F. Brown

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In 1913 the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired an enigmatically shaped plate of engraved bronze now on exhibition in the Roman Court (*fig. 1*).¹ It was published at that time as Etruscan work of the third century B.C.² The suggestion was made that the upper register (*fig. 2*) showed Leda and the swan, but that the remaining figures on the plaque made such an identification perilous. It was also suggested that the object might have been a horse's nosepiece.³ The label which now accompanies the bronze states that it is Roman, and dates in the fourth century A.D.⁴ The subject matter is described as uncertain. I believe that it is possible to establish the correctness of Miss Richter's original suggestion as to the interpretation of the figural decoration, now, however, as an ensemble, and also to assign the plaque to a more acceptable chronological and geographical location. As far as the use of the object is concerned, I have no further suggestions to make beyond the fact that it bears only the slightest resemblance to known horse equipment, whereas it has certain similarities with quiver appliques which have been found in South Russia from the sixth century B.C. onward.⁵

The decoration is divided into three horizontal zones. The uppermost (*fig. 2*), contains, from left to right, a tree, a swan, a half-clothed woman with a diadem on her head, and a personification of a source. In the central zone (*fig. 3*), a tully clothed woman with veiled hands, wearing a diadem, and obviously pregnant, reclines facing left, on a curved mattress. She is confronted by another fully clothed standing female, also diademed, who gestures as though in surprise. In the lowermost register (*fig. 4*) is a bowl-like object with a small decorative band of dots around the rim. Two nude male figures with crosses above their heads sit within the bowl facing a central clothed female who wears a crescent diadem. Below the bowl are some indistinguishable objects which may be a crude attempt at landscape.

The meaning of the group in the uppermost zone is clear: Leda is

surprised at the banks of the Eurotas by Zeus, who has assumed the guise of a swan. Dramatic elements which make the story clear are the aggressive gesture made by the swan in lifting his leg toward Leda, the gesture of repulsion made by Leda, and the gesture of surprise made by the nymph of the source.⁶ To elucidate the remaining portion of the narrative, it is necessary to read the central and lowermost registers together as a spatially unified scene which demonstrates the result of the union implied in the uppermost scene. In the center, Leda appears in childbirth - the similarity between the diadems worn by Leda in the rape scene and the woman on the mattress supports the identity - attended by a gesticulating female with a crescent diadem on her head, and a rather extraordinary physique. Below the mattress is the egg which, according to the most commonly accepted version of the myth, Leda brought forth, containing Castor, Pollux, and Helen.⁷ The identification of these figures is made certain, in the case of the Twins, by the stars engraved above their heads.⁸ The female figure between them, undistinguished except for her crescent diadem, can only be Helen.

Such a scene is not entirely unique in ancient art, but may be seen with certain variations on a sarcophagus from Aix, of the late second century A.D. (*fig. 5*) where the only essential difference is that the occupants of the egg are shown as infants and not as full-grown adults.¹⁰ This same sarcophagus has the rape scene at the left of the birth scene. In it the river god Eurotas raises his hand in astonishment as the nymph does on the plaque.¹¹ Robert, in his explanation of the iconography of the sarcophagus, has identified a figure near the *kliné* upon which Leda rests, as Juno Lucina, the goddess of childbirth. Perhaps the figure on the plaque before Leda (who rests on a Byzantine mattress instead of the classical *kliné*) is also a divinity of childbirth. She may be Juno Lucina or perhaps Isis in her role of midwife. The entire decoration on the plaque is thus explained as a unified exposition of the Leda myth.¹²

In dating and localizing the object more precisely than hitherto, a fragment of engraved ivory from Alexandria, now in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, is of great importance (*fig. 6*).¹³ Strzygowski does not definitely date the fragment, but since he has grouped it with other pieces which he dates in the sixth century A.D., apparently he must consider it not far from this date. The emphasis on the outline of the figure is common to both the ivory and the bronze, as are certain tricks of drawing such as the double line showing the rotundity of the stomach (compare especially the nymph of the source on the plaque with the ivory hermaphrodite), the rather pendulous effect of the breasts, the mannered turn of the head, and ovoid shape of the face. These are, in turn, characteristics which Matzulewitch has found in late antique silver work of the fifth to seventh centuries A.D.¹⁴ As he has already remarked, a basin, (*fig. 7*) dated by silversmith's marks in the reign of Anastasius (491-518 A.D.), shows the same important role played by contour and line.¹⁵ A similar style may be seen on the engraved panels of a casket in the Cairo Museum (*fig. 8*), dated by Dalton in the fifth century A.D.¹⁶ It also appears at Bawit, especially in the fresco of the Baptism of Christ in Chapel XVII (*fig. 9*).¹⁷ The small figure kneeling at the right of Christ compares favorably in style with the Twins seated in their egg on the plaque. This Bawit figure has an interesting connection with the Leda myth. A silver bucket of the fifth century A.D. from the Concesti find, now in the Hermitage, has a Leda scene upon it (*fig. 10*).¹⁸ In addition to the main protagonists, a small winged Eros kneels at the right of Leda and offers her a star-spangled egg.¹⁹ The figure at Bawit, dated probably in the sixth century A.D., is almost an exact replica, although wingless, of the Concesti Eros. The egg, however, has been removed from his outstretched right hand and placed as a support beneath his left. The obvious inference is that there was a common source of inspiration for both figures which was available both to an artist in Egypt and to one on the opposite side of the Mediterranean. We see, again, as in the case of the Salome scene,²⁰ a borrowing of pagan iconography for Christian needs with a

complete disregard of the meaning of the pagan figure.

The stylistic elements which have been mentioned in relation to the plaque all indicate a date between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. as appropriate for the plaque itself. A comparison between the Concesti bucket, mentioned earlier, and a plate²¹ of the seventh century A.D. in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, which shows a remarkably classical figure conception, will make it clear that the plaque must be dated between these two extremes, probably in the sixth century A.D. The 'over-all' character of its design is also in harmony with such a date, as a comparison with the composition of the Bargello diptych²² or the Cluny St. Paul ivory,²³ both of the sixth century A.D., will show.

A certain dichotomy of style is apparent in the plaque which may indicate that its prototypes were in different traditions. The uppermost register has an illusionistic, garrulously explicit setting, whereas the lower two zones show the figures placed in undefined space. A similar juxtaposition may be seen in the panels of the Cairo casket mentioned above (*fig. 8*), wherein the setting for the putto is much less circumstantial than that for the birds which flank him. This dichotomy, then, appears to be a possible criterion of style for the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

The steatopygy, too, which is so noticeable in the goddess who confronts Leda on the plaque, occurs again and again in art of the fifth and sixth century A.D. The putto of the Cairo casket demonstrates it, as well as certain figures in the diptych of Apollo and the Muses in the Bibliothèque Nationale, which is dated in the fifth or sixth century A.D.²⁴ Since it is generally lacking in the South Russian silverware which Matzulewitch has discussed, it may possibly be considered as a manifestation of local style. The evidence which has been cited for the date of the bronze plaque all points to a Near Eastern, if not an

Egyptian, origin for it.

The Egyptian possibility is very appealing when it is remembered that there was a flourishing Isis cult on the island of Philae until Justinian suppressed it in 543 A.D.²⁵ We know, furthermore, that there was a strong connection between the Dioscures and Isis.²⁶ We also know that Leda occurs frequently in Coptic art²⁷ and that the Twins, too, are popular in late antique Egyptian art.²⁸ The ivory hermaphrodite which Strzygowski bought in Alexandria is most likely of local workmanship. Its marked stylistic resemblance to figures on the plaque recalls Dalton's statement that in Alexandria the good Hellenistic tradition lasted, especially in certain schools of ivory carving, down to the sixth century A.D.,²⁹ and further, that 'the ivory carvers and silver-smiths seem to have reproduced the same subjects in a very similar style.'³⁰ The publication of Matzulewitch, which has been mentioned before, also bears witness to the survival in Byzantine art of an astonishingly classical style well into the seventh century A.D. There can be no reason, therefore, to reject a sixth century A.D. date for the plaque in the Metropolitan Museum on the grounds of its very classical style. Nor can there be much objection to its localization in Egypt in view of Dalton's statements mentioned above, and of the Isis connections, and the stylistic comparisons with the Alexandrian hermaphrodite and the Bawît frescoes, among other monuments.

The subject matter, date, and provenance sufficiently established, a final statement may be made that the subject, as engraved, gives evidence of having been copied from some other medium, probably silverware of the type discussed by Matzulewitch. In support of this statement the peculiar drapery arrangement over the left knee of Leda in the rape scene may be noted. This is unmotivated as far as the figure is concerned, but it follows the lines of drapery seen on a figure on the bucket in Vienna.³¹ The motivation in the latter instance is a raised knee which is omitted on the plaque although the resultant

disturbance of the drapery is retained. The enlargement of the hands, too, is also found on this silverware.³²

This bronze engraving is, for the present, a unique object in late antique art.

Notes

- * In the preparation of this paper, I wish to acknowledge the assistance and encouragement of Dr. Otto Brendel of Washington University and of Dr. Karl Lehmann-Hartleben of New York University. It was read before the Archaeological Institute of America in Baltimore, December, 1940.
1. Accession no. 13.225.7. The plaque is 10 5/16'' high and 7 7/16'' wide at the top. It is absolutely flat and has twelve holes along its edge, four of which still contain split rivets for affixing it to some soft material such as leather or cloth. It was first published in the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, IX (1914), pp. 93-94, and fig. 5. It is said to have been found in Rome.
 2. Richter, G.M.A., *Catalogue of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Bronzes*, New York, 1915, pp. 80-81, no. 26.
 3. As, e.g. in Schumacher, K., *Beschreibung der Sammlung Antiker Bronzen*, Karlsruhe, 1890, nos. 780 ff.
 4. Dr. Zahn is responsible for the newer dating.
 5. See Minns, E.H., *Scythians and Greeks*, Cambridge, 1913, p. 211, figs. 111, 112.
 6. A tree and a source are the usual accompaniments of the scene, see Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *Realencyclopaedie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, XII, col. 1124. A similar scene is to be found in Robert, C., *Die Antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs*, Berlin, 1890, II, Pl. II, no. 4.
 7. Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *op. cit.* 1117.

8. Roscher, W.H., *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, Leipzig, 1884, I, part 1, col. 1171.
9. Chapouthier, F., *Les Dioscures au service d'une déesse*, Paris, 1935, p. 143, "Lorsque, entre les deux Dioscures, apparaît une déesse que ne caractérise aucun autre attribut particulier qu'un emblème lumineux, on ne péchera jamais en l'appelant Hélène."
10. Robert, C., *op. cit.*, Pl. II, no. 2, and p. 6; Chapouthier, F., *op. cit.*, p. 129, fig. 5. Since the Dioscures ordinarily appear as adults when in company with Helen, there is no reason to doubt the identification of the figures in the egg even though, biologically, their maturity is unreasonable.
11. A nymph takes the place of the river god on the sarcophagus mentioned above in note 6.
12. There are striking similarities between the birth scene as shown on the plaque and scenes involving Salome at the Nativity of Christ (see Smith, E.B., *Early Christian Iconography*, Princeton, 1918, pp. 23-28 and figs. 17 and 21). These scenes are all of Egyptian origin as Smith points out, an interesting observation in view of the development, below, of my arguments concerning the provenance of the plaque.
13. Strzygowski, J., 'Hellenistische und koptische Kunst in Alexandria', *Bulletin de la Société archéologique d'Alexandrie*, no. 5, (1902), p. 13, fig. 5.
14. Matzulewitch, L., *Byzantinische Antike*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1929, pp. 133-134.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 79 and Pl. XVI.

16. *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, Oxford, 1911, p. 181, fig. 108.
17. Clédat, J., "Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouft", *Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, XII (1904), Pl. XLV.
18. Matzulewitch, *op. cit.*, Pl. XLIV and p. 134.
19. See Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, p. 142, fig. 9, for a similarly decorated egg on an altar from Epidaureus.
20. See note 12 above.
21. Matzulewitch, *op. cit.*, Pl. II.
22. Dalton, *op. cit.*, p. 193, fig. 116.
23. Cossio, M.B. and Pijoan, J., *Summa Artis*, Bilbao and Madrid, 1935, VII, p. 297, fig. 434.
24. Duthuit, G. and Volbach, W.F., *Art Byzantin*, Paris, 1933, Pl. XVI and p. 41. I am indebted to Mr. Harris K. Prior of the Institute of Fine Arts for bringing this monument to my attention.
25. Diehl, C., *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VI^e siècle*, Paris, 1901, pp. 549, 552, 558.
26. Chapouthier, *op. cit.*, pp. 248 ff.
27. See Lauzière, J., "Le mythe de Lédä dans l'art copte", *Bulletin de l'Association des amis de l'art copte*, II (1936), p. 38, for a list of Leda representations in Coptic art. The author's contention that Leda can be equated with St. Anne is very weak.

28. See Wulff, O. and Volbach, W.F., *Spaetantike und koptische Stoffe aus aegyptischen Grabfunden*, Berlin, 1926, p. 52, no. 9133, and Pl. LXXVI.
29. *East Christian Art*, Oxford, 1925, p. 43.
30. *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, p. 181.
31. See note 21 above.
32. Matzulewitch, *op. cit.*, p. 133.



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 1. Bronze plaque, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

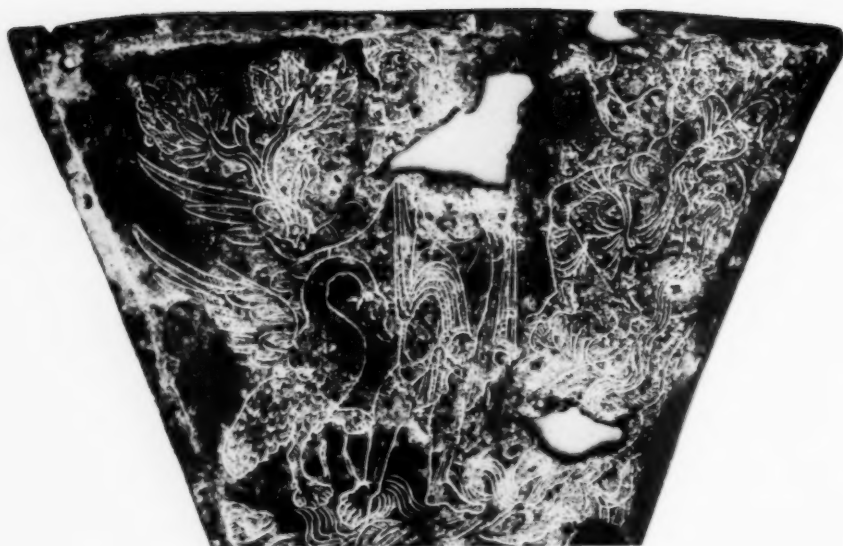


Fig. 2. Bronze plaque, detail.



Fig. 3. Bronze plaque, detail.



Fig. 4. Bronze plaque, detail.

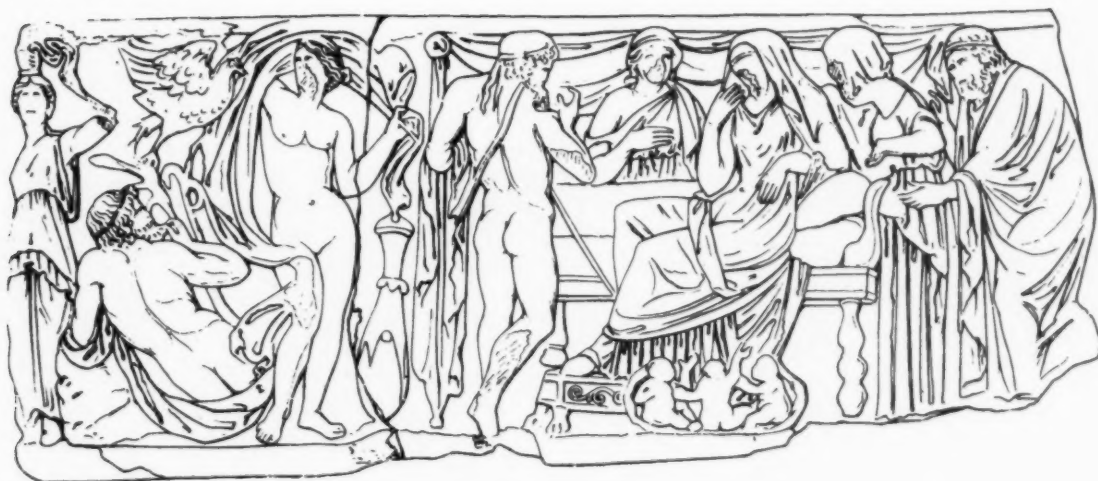


Fig. 5. Sarcophagus, Aix.



Fig. 6. Ivory engraving, Berlin Kaiser Friedrich Museum.



Fig. 7. Silver Bowl, Leningrad, Hermitage.



Fig. 8. Casket, Cairo.

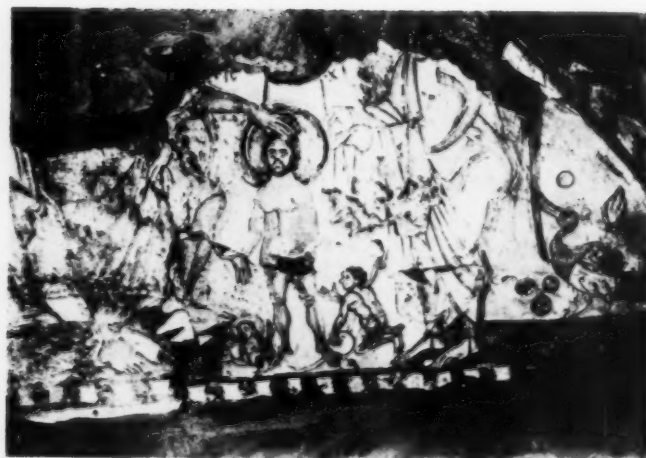
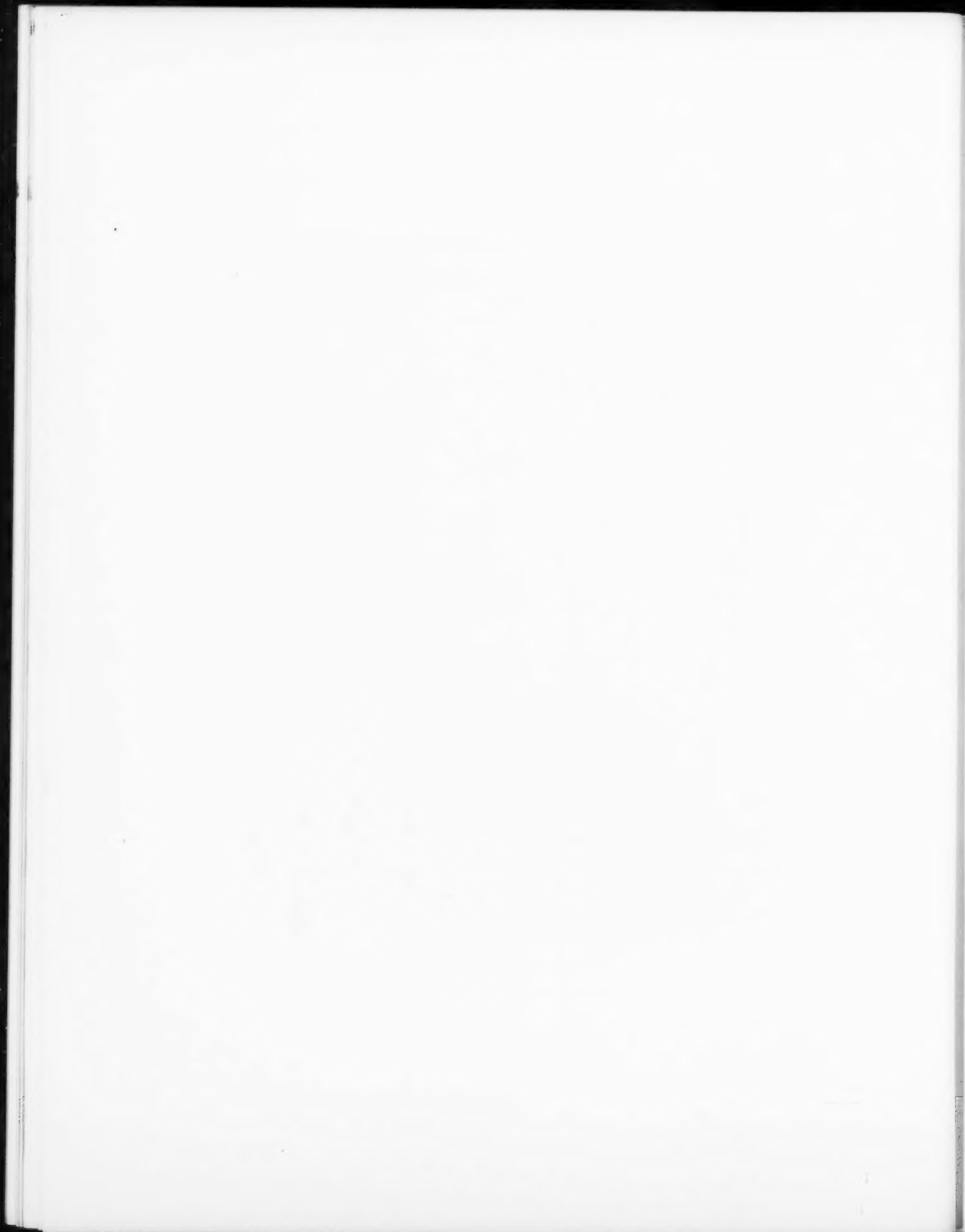


Fig. 9. Fresco, Bawit.



Fig. 10. Silver bucket,
Leningrad, Hermitage.



THE ORIGIN OF THE LUCCHESE CROSS FORM*

by

Clairece Black

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Among the painted crosses of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in Italy, a 'Lucchese' type may be distinguished from contemporary crucifixes of other centers by a peculiarity of its shape. In general, painted crosses of this period are characterized by a widening of that area of the upright panel which is below the cross-bar, to allow for the introduction of scenes from the Passion. Crucifixes from extra-Lucchese regions adhere uniformly to a simple rectangular shape for this widening of the panel, its lower terminus being a straight horizontal line. A Pisan crucifix of the late twelfth century (*fig. 1*) and a Florentine cross, probably somewhat later in date (*fig. 2*), illustrate the form generally employed outside Lucchese territory.

In the Lucchese crosses of San Michele (*fig. 3*)¹ and of Sta. Maria dei Servi (*fig. 4*),² one finds a shape fundamentally different from that of the non-Lucchese examples. Below the rectangular section containing the small scenes, there has been added on each side a curve extending inward, from the bottom of the wider panel to the edges of the narrow strip in which Christ's body is placed; the outline then coincides briefly with the center strip, and ends by defining a rectilinear section comparable to that on the Pisan cross. The area enclosed within this outline strongly suggests the shape of a chalice, and has therefore been referred to as 'the chalice base.'³ Comparison of the Lucchese crosses with the non-Lucchese shows that the 'chalice base' occurs only in crosses from the workshops of Lucca. Since the form appears in no other type of cross, it is probable that the resemblance to a liturgical chalice has special meaning. The purpose of this paper is to explain the significance of the chalice base, and to show that this peculiarity of the Lucchese crosses was inspired by an extraordinary artistic and religious monument, the *Volto Santo* of Lucca.

The earliest Lucchese cross known, the crucifix in Sarzana (*fig. 5*), was painted by Guglielmo in 1138,⁴ probably for the cathedral in Luni, a small town on the west coast. Luni suffered severely from Saracen

raids, and finally the seat of the bishop was transferred to Sarzana in 1204,⁵ at which time many objects from the former cathedral were deposited in the new, including the cross by Guglielmo and a little flask supposed to contain the Precious Blood of Christ.⁶ Whether or not this association of the Lucchese cross and the Precious Blood is coincidental, at any rate they are related in their separate connections with the *Volto Santo* of Lucca. It will be seen that both the shape of the cross and the origin of the ampulla may be traced to that source, with which, therefore, it is necessary to deal in some detail.

The *Volto Santo* (fig. 6),⁷ a highly venerated wooden figure of Christ Crucified, was traditionally believed, from very early times, to be an accurate rendering of the sacred countenance, carved by Nicodemus soon after the Crucifixion; hence its identification as the *sacratissimus vultus Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, and the name *Sanctus Vultus*, now *Volto Santo*.

There are several twelfth century versions of a history of the *Volto Santo*⁸ supposedly written by Leobinus, a Lucchese narrator who describes himself modestly as "*diaconus, servorum Christi minimus*."⁹ His *Relatio*¹⁰ tells how Bishop Gualfredus, a pilgrim in Jerusalem, fell asleep after an exhausting day of pious sightseeing and was visited by an angel of the Lord. The angel spoke to Gualfredus of a miraculous image which was an exact representation of the Redeemer as He suffered on the cross (*qualiter in cruce pro hominibus passus sit*).¹¹ The statue was made, the angel said, by Nicodemus (*Nichodemus Phariseus, qui Christum vidit et tetigit*),¹² whose thoughts had dwelt so long and so fervently upon the Saviour (*semper gestaret Christum in pectore, semper haberet in ore*)¹³ that he carved this image of Him, "not by his own, but by divine art" (*sacratissimum vultum non sua, sed divina arte desculpavit*).¹⁴ Obeying at once the angel's urgent "*Surge, famule Dei!*", Gualfredus and his companions found the statue, and, weeping for joy, took it to Joppa. There, following divine direction, they placed it

within a ship which was miraculously provided for its journey westward.

Leobinus describes the arrival of the *Volto Santo* in Italy thus:¹⁵

“The boat went in a straight course through the depths of the sea, with no mortal guidance, for the divine power alone steered it to the port of Luni. The citizens of that place were passing time on the shore, and they are known to have had the custom of robbing and plundering along the seacoast. Seeing the unusual size and shape of the boat, and no mortal person within it, they wondered greatly, and so they decided to seize the ship. But the sacred boat receded far from them, as divine Providence foresaw that they would be full of wrong-doing.”

At this point, Leobinus reports another angelic visitation. A heavenly messenger spoke to Johannes, the Bishop of Lucca, telling him to hasten to the harbor of Luni and to bring back to Lucca the *salvatoris mundi imago*. The bishop and a large number of Lucchese citizens found the people of Luni working with oars and sails and ropes, amid great commotion, on the second day of their endeavors to capture the ship. Leobinus says, “The wind and the waves carried the boat to the shore, but divine power drew it back. For they who do not seek God with a devout mind do not deserve to obtain that which they desire.”¹⁶ Bishop Johannes counselled his men to be quiet and pray; then, because they came in true reverence, the ship offered itself voluntarily, whereupon the Lucchesi shed tears for joy and chanted a hymn.

The solemnity of the occasion, however, was desecrated immediately by violent conflict between the people of Luni and those of Lucca for possession of the divine gift. Bishop Johannes, resorting again to prayer for help, “with kindly love granted to the Bishop of Luni the flask of the Precious Blood of Christ which was inside the *Volto Santo* (*ampullam vitream Christi precioso sanguine refertam, quam ibidem*

repperit, Lunensi episcopo benigna caritate concessit), and carried off to his own city of Lucca the most precious image.¹⁷ Thus the twelfth century narrative of Leobinus accounts for the presence of the *Volto Santo* in Lucca and of the flask of the Saviour's blood in Sarzana, where it came with the cross and other relics from Luni.

In the illustration here shown (*fig. 6*), the *preciosissimus vultus* is arrayed in the satin and jewels under which it was hidden by the munificent devotion of the Lucchese citizenry. It is important to note the chalice placed below the right foot, for its position with respect to the *Volto Santo* is most significant in its bearing upon the problem of this paper.

Representations of the *Volto Santo* show that as far back as the end of the thirteenth century, the chalice stood in that same relation to the figure. This may be observed in a pilgrim's cross of undetermined date, found in France (*fig. 7*), and in a thirteenth century seal made for the Lucchese *Brotherhood of the Twenty Men* (*fig. 8*), a secular organization attached to the cathedral. Fourteenth century Italian art provides an example of it in the right wing of a tabernacle¹⁸ which in 1843 was in the Artaud de Montor collection, Paris. The chalice is also represented below the foot in an early fifteenth century French manuscript in the Vatican Library (*fig. 9*), and it appears in fifteenth and sixteenth century paintings of the *Volto Santo* in Germany.²⁰ A painting of about 1520, by a Florentine master under Lucchese influence (*fig. 10*),²¹ shows the same arrangement, and it is repeated in 1756 on a Lucchese coin (*fig. 11*).²² This evidence shows that the chalice has been an accepted and widely known attribute of the famous image at least from the thirteenth century on, and that the configuration of crucifix and chalice is peculiar to Lucca.

Schnuerer and Ritz have attempted to account for the presence of the chalice below the foot of the *Volto Santo* by the following argument.²³

It is well known that images, even of bronze, have been damaged by the fervent caresses of the faithful. For many years, pilgrims had come to Lucca to see the *vultus Domini* and to bestow a pious kiss upon its foot, which became so worn²⁶ by the lips of the devout that eventually the silver shoe which covered it on most of the days of the year ceased to fit properly. Therefore, the chalice was placed below the foot to provide support for the shoe, which would otherwise have slipped off.

While this theory has elements of likelihood, undoubtedly there is further reason for the arrangement. A chalice is a sacred vessel; it is not likely to be employed for a merely mechanical function which might be performed equally well by a nail or a piece of wire. Even if one accepts the explanation of Schnuerer and Ritz, it seems highly probable that the chalice served a symbolical purpose as well as a practical one, and that its position was suggested to some person connected with the cathedral by a convention well established in the art contemporary with and preceding his time. That convention is the representation in Crucifixions of a chalice which is placed in an immediate relation to the figure of Christ on the cross.

There are about thirty-five examples of these "chalice Crucifixions"²⁷ in the twelfth and preceding centuries. For the purposes of this paper, two major divisions may be proposed. One type may be referred to as the *Ecclesia* type, characterized by the presence of the personified Church, who holds a chalice below the wound in the Saviour's side to receive the Precious Blood as it streams forth for man's salvation. The *Volto Santo* type is a more static version of the scene, where a chalice is set below the feet to express the same theological concept.

Although "chalice Crucifixions" first appear in the Carolingian period, in earlier art there are frequent instances of the abstract association of a cross with a vessel which may or may not be a chalice. For example, the Early Christian art of Ravenna provides an illustration

in the carved wall decoration of Sant' Appollinare Nuovo (*fig. 12*), where two peacocks flank a vase or chalice surmounted by a Chi-Rho monogram in the form of a cross. The Carolingian innovation is the presentation of a chalice in relation to a cross whereon the Saviour is actually represented.

Probably the earliest instance of the 'chalice Crucifixion' is a miniature in the Sacramentary of Drogo (*fig. 13*), a manuscript of the first half of the ninth century which may be considered a prelude to the school of St. Denis.²⁸ The developed St. Denis type of Crucifixion²⁹ is illustrated by an ivory plaque in Munich which was probably the cover of the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeran (*fig. 14*).³⁰ Here *Ecclesia*, carrying a banner, is represented first in the act of receiving Christ's blood in a chalice and then, on the right, in conversation with a personification of Jerusalem wearing a crenellated crown. A panel in Tournai (*fig. 15*),³¹ of the late ninth or early tenth century, follows the St. Denis tradition, with the addition of labels clarifying the identities of the Church and Jerusalem; here the somewhat extraneous dialogue between the two is omitted, leaving the straightforward, equally balanced opposition of their figures which became the formula in later art. The simple, dogmatic rendering is continued in the composition of a plaque in the Bargello (*fig. 16*),³² where Jerusalem, or the Synagogue, turns her back on the scene. Probably unique is a Reichenau manuscript of the *Song of Songs* in Bamberg (*fig. 17*),³³ in which the miniature elaborates on the theme, stating in specific terms the formula of salvation through the Saviour's Precious Blood by showing *Ecclesia* receiving it in a chalice and dispensing it to the faithful, who approach in a long, curving line that begins at the baptismal font.

The *Volto Santo* type of 'chalice Crucifixion' is a later and less dramatic expression of the concept. The doctrine is now stated by means of the simple, formal symbol of a chalice below the suppedaneum, with the figures of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* absent. The emphasis here is

on the inexpressible value of the blood shed for man's redemption, with a reminder that the Church, appropriately identified with the receptacle of the Precious Blood, is integrally related to the Saviour, being indeed founded on and perpetuated by His sacrifice. Contrast of the Old Law with the New is no longer the purpose of the representation. An illustration of this more formalized statement is an ivory plaque in the Musée Cluny (*fig. 18*),³⁴ where the significance of the chalice below Christ's feet is urged upon the beholder by its position within a medallion. Two manuscripts, a Sacramentary in Bamberg (*fig. 20*)³⁵ and a Pericope in Munich (*fig. 21*),³⁶ may be cited as eleventh and twelfth century renderings of this type. An interesting combination of the *Ecclesia* and *Volto Santo* types occurs on a wooden plaque in a bookcover in Cividale (*fig. 22*),³⁷ of the early thirteenth century. Here a figure labeled '*Ecclesia*' holds a disproportionately large chalice at the very base of the cross, so that the vessel bears the same relation to the wound as in the Cluny ivory (*fig. 18*)

Few centers could be found in which a graphic motive dwelling on the preciousness of the Saviour's Blood would be more acceptable than in Lucca. Several facts suggest the conclusion that Lucca was the center of a special cult of the Precious Blood. Foremost among them is the history of the great crucifix itself. According to tradition, it will be recalled, the *Volto Santo* became the property of Lucca on the occasion when the phial of the Precious Blood within it was astutely used to terminate the conflict between Lucca and Luni over possession of the statue. In this case, it is not fact, but popular belief, which is of moment. In the account of Leobinus, the crucifix is intimately associated with the Precious Blood. The statue itself is shown to be less a relic than a reliquary; for it is hollow, and there is a small shrine for relics, closed by a little door, in the neck of the figure.³⁸ Further evidence of Lucchese preoccupation with the Precious Blood is provided by the legend that a painted cross, hanging in the Church of Sta. Giulia (*fig. 23*) was so severely damaged when a Jew threw a stone at it

that drops of blood dripped from it.³⁹

Thus it appears probable that a bishop or a canon of the Cathedral of Lucca, disturbed by the insecurity of the *Volto Santo's* loosely fitting shoe, had an opportunity to adapt a symbolic motive to a practical necessity. Indeed, the solution was almost inescapable, by reason of the particular connection of the image with the concept of the Precious Blood.

The question now arises: when was the chalice placed below the foot of the *Volto Santo*? Was it before or after 1138, the date of the earliest of the Lucchese crosses? Schnuerer and Ritz have placed the time "before 1213,"⁴⁰ citing a document of that year which refers to "the chalice of the *Volto Santo*" (*calicem sancte crucis*) and to the substitution of a new chalice connected with a box to receive offerings. However, the date may be narrowed down somewhat by a consideration of the legend of the Minstrel and the *Volto Santo*.⁴¹

Twelfth century literature has preserved several stories of ignorant but pious wanderers who found favor with holy images, such as the well-known Tumbler of Notre Dame, who offered to the Virgin a tumbling performance in place of Latin prayers. The *Volto Santo*, too, rewarded an entertainer for devout intent. The Gothic manuscript in the Vatican Library (*fig. 8*), mentioned above, shows this scene. A reverent but quite illiterate minstrel rendered homage to the *Volto Santo* by playing his repertoire of songs, the only offering he could make. The holy image was appreciative and rewarded him with one of its silver shoes. When the troubadour attempted to leave the cathedral with the gift, he was detained by the bishop and the clergy, who heard his story with skepticism. Replacing the shoe, the bishop commanded another performance, and this time was forced to believe, for the miracle was repeated.

It may be assumed that this legend had its origin in an actual

falling off of the shoe, perhaps repeated. A French version of the story, datable about 1170, explains why the *Volto Santo* still has both its shoes by affirming that the bishop bought the shoe from the minstrel and replaced it.⁴² There appears to be no earlier account of the miracle than that in a book written about 1150 by an Icelandic abbot who had heard the tale in Lucca on his way to the Holy Land some years before.⁴³ However, as will be pointed out later, in the third quarter of the eleventh century the *Volto Santo* was already a famous object of pilgrimage. If it was not clothed in the tunic and silver shoes at that time, at any rate its attire was an accepted convention at the time when the Icelandic pilgrim learned the minstrel story. It would seem that as early as the beginning of the twelfth century, the probably *post facto* legend of the minstrel's adventure was occasioned by the falling off of the shoe. Therefore one may conclude that the function of the chalice as a support for the shoe was necessitated no later than the first quarter of the twelfth century.

Returning to the question of the Lucchese cross and its geometrical form, one finds its relation to the *Volto Santo* entirely comprehensible as a reflection, in a single two-dimensional object, of Lucchese veneration for the far-famed *Sanctus Vultus* and the Precious Blood associated with it. Although the existence of a separate tradition in art with respect to the Precious Blood has been pointed out above, the fact that the Lucchese cross-and-chalice crucifix had to be inspired by some further circumstance is shown by the total absence of this particular shape in crosses from other centers. Only in Lucca was the chalice base employed. Therefore, in Lucca the reason for its use is to be sought. Reconsideration of the *Volto Santo*, this time as an object of religious worship, suggests that the *vultus Domini* itself was the direct inspiration for the chalice-base crucifix.

Lucca's history prior to the year 1308 is poorly documented because most of the records were destroyed when the Pisans captured the city in

that year, but fragments and copies of records prove that the *Volto Santo* was famous all over Europe in the second half of the eleventh century. In the *Regesto del Capitolo di Lucca*,⁴⁴ there are three references in 1077 to St. Martin's hospice for the accomodation of pilgrims (*ad usum et victum pelegrinorum*). William II of England, whose reign began in 1087, swore, when strongly moved, 'by the holy countenance of Lucca!'⁴⁵ His brother, Robert of Normandy, stopped in Lucca in 1096, when the pilgrims of the First Crusade were blessed by Urban II.⁴⁶ A papal bull of Paschal II, dated 1107, mentions pilgrimages to a chapel set aside in the cathedral for the *Volto Santo*, and costly gifts received by the image in the past. A gift of two gold marks from Duke Suatopulc of Bohemia is recalled in the notice of his death in 1109, 'XI Kal. Oct. ob(iit) Suatopulc dux Boemorum, qui misit II marcas auri ad honorem s. +(sancte crucis).'⁴⁸ Copies of Lucchese documents of the next century call attention to the great number and value of the gifts brought to the *Volto Santo*, and to the admirable piety of the Lucchese populace in the celebration of many festivals in honor of the image, not only at that time, but for a long time past.⁴⁹ That veneration of the *Volto Santo* was widespread, and began at a very early date, is indisputable. By the time of Guglielmo in 1138, its position as a focal point of religious interest was long established.

A further reason for the use of a chalice base is the Lucchese cult of the Precious Blood, attested to by legends of the *Volto Santo* and of the Sta. Giulia cross, noted above.

It is therefore possible to conclude that the Lucchese cross form represents an allusion to the great local image by means of the combined cross and chalice. In the symmetrical rendering commonly adopted for painted crucifixes, the chalice could be most prominently included by incorporation of its shape with the body of the cross, in the manner illustrated by the three Lucchese crucifixes under consideration.

* This paper is based on a suggestion by Dr. Richard Offner, whom I wish to thank also for generous advice and criticism. It is a preliminary report of an investigation not yet completed, and except for the conclusion and general scheme, is not to be read as my final statement.

1. See Vavala, E.S., *La Croce dipinta Italiana*, Verona, 1929, pp. 417-438.

2. *Loc. cit.*

3. By Dr. Richard Offner, in lectures at the Institute of Fine Arts.

4. Van Marle, R., *The development of the Italian schools of painting*, The Hague, 1923, I, 212. The inscription around the Saviour's nimbus is reported by Rosini, G., (*Storia della pittura Italiana*, II, Pisa, 1848, 198, n.3) to have been: *Anno Milleno centeno terquoque deno octavo pinxit Guilielmus et haec metra finxit.*

5. Innocent III declared Luni "civitas destructa" in a bull of March 21, 1204, and authorized the transfer of the bishopric. Jung, J., 'Die Stadt Luna und ihr Gebiet,' *Mitteilungen des Instituts fuer Oesterreichische Geschichtsforschung*, XXII (1901), 193ff.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

7. Schnuerer, G., and Ritz, J.M., *Sankt Kuemmernis und Volto Santo*, Dusseldorf, 1934, (*Forschungen zur Volkskunde*, XIII-XV), with exhaustive bibliography. See also: Francovich, Géza de, 'Il Volto Santo di Lucca,' *Bollettino Storico Lucchese*, A. VIII (1936), no. 1.

8. Schnuerer—Ritz, *op.cit.*, p. 123ff.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-133, the text considered basic by the authors.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
12. *Loc. cit.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
14. *Loc. cit.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 130. The paragraph which follows is an abbreviated paraphrase of the Latin text.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
17. *Loc. cit.*
18. *Ibid.*, p. 197-8.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
20. Montor, Artaud de, *Peintres primitifs, collection de tableaux rapportée d'Italie*, Paris, 1843. p. 34; Pl. 19.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
22. *Ibid.*, *passim*.
23. Attribution by Dr. Richard Offner.
24. Schnuerer—Ritz, *op.cit.*, p. 172; fig. 36.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 118, from Guerra, A., *Storia del Volto Santa di Lucca*, Lucca, 1881, pp. 28, 32, and 429.
27. The discussion of "chalice Crucifixions" is a tentative presentation of the type in general. Analysis of its origin, development, and diffusion will depend on the results of further research.
28. Prof. C. R. Morey, lectures on Carolingian Art, Institute of Fine Arts, 1941.
29. The St. Denis type of Crucifixion is characterized by two features, only one of which is referred to here. Prof. A. M. Friend, ('Carolingian art in the abbey of St. Denis,' *Art Studies*, I, 1923, 67ff.) has dealt chiefly with the peculiar behavior of the Sun and Moon. The second motive is the opposition of the Church and Synagogue, which is my sole concern here.
30. Goldschmidt, A., *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und saechsischen Kaiser*, Berlin, 1914, I, 25-26; Pl. XX, no. 41.
31. *Ibid.*, I, p. 78-79; Pl. LXXI, no. 160.
32. *Ibid.*, I, p. 58; Pl. L, no. 114.
33. Swarzenski, H., *Vorgotische Miniaturen*, Konigstein in Taunus and Leipzig, 1931, 2nd ed., p. 30 (*Die blauen Buecher*).
34. Goldschmidt, *op.cit.*, II, p. 27; Pl. XV, no. 48.
35. Bange, E.F., *Eine bayerische Malerschule des XI. und XII. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1923, pp. 70ff.; Pl. XXVI, fig. 65.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 53 et passim; Pl. LIX, fig. 162.

37. Haseloff, A., *Eine thuringisch-saechsische Malerschule des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Strassburg, 1897, pp. 10-11.
38. Schnuerer—Ritz, *op.cit.*, p. 140, 157.
39. Sirén, O., *Toskanische Maler im XIII. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1922, pp. 56-7.
40. Schnuerer—Ritz, *op.cit.*, p. 146.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 159ff.
42. Foerster, W., 'Le Saint Vou de Luques,' in *Mélanges Chabaneau, Festschrift fuer Camille Chabaneau*, Erlangen, 1907, (*Romanische Forschungen*, XXIII, 1).
43. Schnuerer—Ritz, *op.cit.*, p. 163.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
49. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

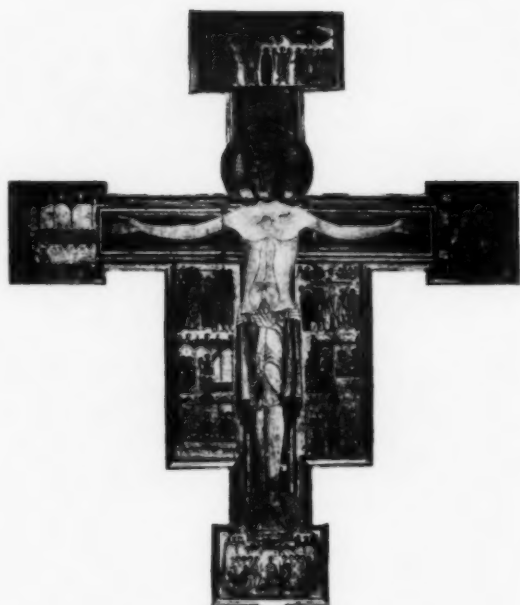


Fig. 1. Crucifix, Pisa, Museo Civico (no. 15).



Fig. 2. Crucifix, Florence, Academy (no. 432).



Fig. 3. Crucifix, Lucca, San Michele.

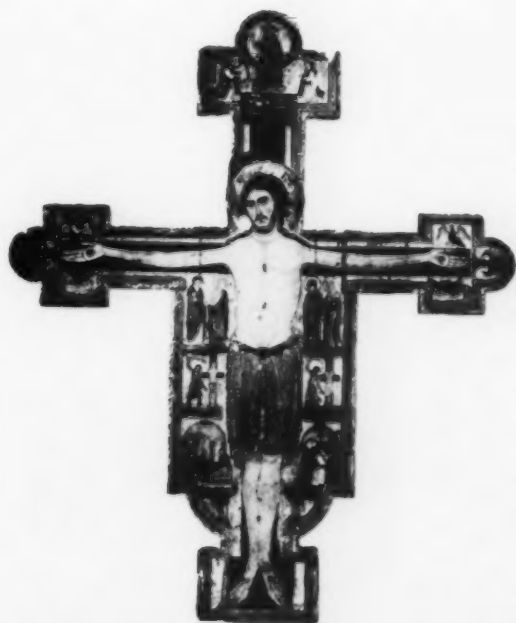


Fig. 4. Crucifix from Sta. Maria dei Servi, Lucca, Museo Comunale.



Fig. 7. Pilgrim's cross
from Wissant
(Pas-de-Calais).



Fig. 8. Seal of the
Brotherhood of the
Twenty Men, Lucca.



Fig. 9. The Minstrel and the
Volto Santo, cod. pal. lat. 1988,
Rome, Vatican Library.



Fig. 5. Guglielmo, Crucifix,
Sarzana, Duomo.



Fig. 6. The Volto Santo, Lucca, Duomo.



Fig. 10. The *Volto Santo*, Budapest Museum.



Fig. 11. Lucchese coin of 1756.



Fig. 13. Crucifixion, Drogo Sacramentary, Paris, Bibl. nat.



Fig. 12. (right). Relief, Ravenna, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo.



Fig. 14. Crucifixion, ivory bookcover, Munich, Staatsbibl.



Fig. 15. Crucifixion, detail of ivory plaque, Tournai.



Fig. 16. Crucifixion, ivory plaque, Florence, Bargello.

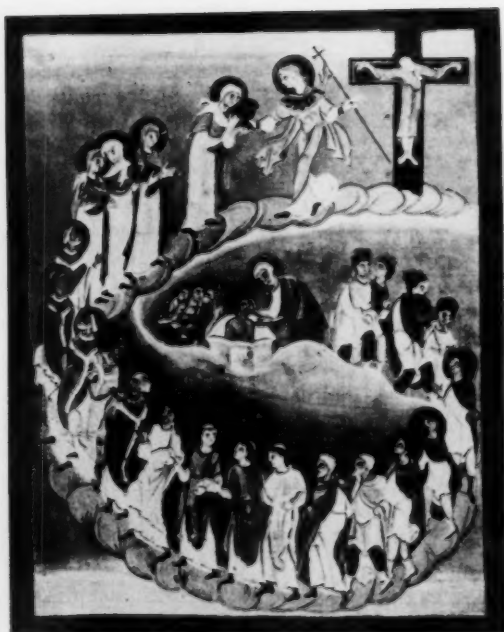


Fig. 17. Miniature, *Song of Songs*, Bamberg, Staatsbibl.



Fig. 18. Crucifixion, ivory plaque, Paris, Musée Cluny.



Fig. 19. Crucifixion miniature, Bamberg, Staatsbibl., Lit. 2 (Ed. III, 11).



Fig. 20. Crucifixion miniature, Munich, Staatsbibl., Clm. 2939.



Fig. 22. Crucifix, Lucca, Sta. Giulia.



Fig. 21. Bookcover, Cividale, Museo Archeologico.



NEW EVIDENCE FOR THE DATE OF PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA'S
COUNT AND COUNTESS OF URBINO*

by

Creighton E. Gilbert

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As is so often the case, undocumented works of Piero della Francesca have received widely divergent datings. In the well-known diptych of the Count and Countess of Urbino in the Uffizi,¹ however, certain limits proceed from the subject matter, since the painting could hardly date before the marriage of Federigo da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza on February 10, 1460.² This *terminus post quem* would be a false assumption only if various parts of the painting were executed at different times. Such a hypothesis, which has never been put forward, may, however, be dismissed on a consideration of the consistent unity of design, style, and, as will be shown, of iconography, apparent through the whole picture.

Scholars have variously assigned three specific dates. Crowe and Cavalcaselle,³ though they did not consider it as final, first suggested the year 1469, basing their argument on documents which show that Piero was in Urbino in that year. On April eighth, the Confraternity of Corpus Domini of Urbino paid to the painter Giovanni Santi, eight Bolognese florins which he had spent in paying Piero's living expenses when he came there to consider painting a panel for the Confraternity. This is the picture for which Paolo Uccello had already painted the predella; the main panel was afterwards painted by Justus of Ghent, then Federigo's official painter, from 1473 to 1475.⁴ Since Piero came to Urbino for a specific purpose which he did not carry out, and seems to have remained only so long as eight florins would support him, it is improbable, on the evidence as presented, that the portraits were painted at this point. But this is the most concrete evidence for Piero's actual presence in Urbino, and so the date 1469 has been accepted by several critics.

Witting,⁶ on the other hand, considered that the best date was at the time of the marriage, and was followed by Maud Cruttwell,⁷ and by Van Marle,⁸ who points out the unicorns in the triumph as an allegory of virginity, and suggests that the Countess appears very young. Little

confidence can, however, be placed in this criterion, since she died at twenty-six, and since another critic⁹ has seen signs of age in the same picture. Moreover, the unicorns are more easily interpreted as symbols of wifely virtue.¹⁰

These two suggestions were current when, in 1905, a third was made by Adolfo Cinquini. A few years before, he had published a manuscript¹¹ in the Vatican, containing, among other things, numerous complimentary poems addressed to the Count of Urbino, including a group of six by the Carmelite monk Ferabo. Now, in another pamphlet,¹² he included an appendix, publishing more fully two of the poems by Ferabo, and assigning to them the date 1466. One of these was in praise of a portrait of Federigo by Piero, and Cinquini proposed to identify this portrait with half of the Uffizi diptych. This suggestion was considered important enough to be reprinted in *L'Arte*,¹³ where it was condensed, with the unfortunate result that the date 1466 assigned to the poem was made more plausible.¹⁴ Cinquini saw in the portrait of the Countess the aging produced by childbearing (she had nine children during her twelve years of marriage) and government (she was regent during her husband's wars).¹⁵ He therefore dates the picture as late as possible, just before the poem, and the date 1465-6 has since been accepted by most scholars, even finding its way as an assured fact into popular literature.¹⁶ It was rendered more acceptable by the fact that Berenson¹⁷ had previously assigned the date 1465, and others considered it as "before 1469."¹⁸ It seems strange, however, that Ferabo omits all mention of the Countess if he is referring to our picture,¹⁹ and it is more probable that Piero painted various portraits of the Court.

I shall attempt to fix a date by examination of evidence within the picture.

The obverse of the panels contains two facing profile busts. It is usually remarked that the Count is shown in profile because he had

lost one eye in a tournament in 1450, but there is another and profounder reason. On contemporary medals the obverse is typically a profile head or bust, the reverse often an allegory eulogizing the subject, sometimes with an accompanying inscription. That a painted portrait should bear an allegory on the reverse is unusual, and here the immediate precedent is undoubtedly a medal.

The allegory of the reverse takes the form of a triumph. The Count sits in armour near the back of a cart and is being crowned by Fame, who stands behind him; at the front of the cart, their legs dangling, sit the four cardinal Virtues. A Cupid stands on a projecting platform driving a team of horses, while approaching them is a team of unicorns, driven by a similar Cupid, and drawing a similar cart on which the Countess sits. The three theological Virtues sit in front of her, and behind her stand two female figures, one young, the other old. In her hands the Countess has a small book, corresponding to the Count's scepter.

These triumphs help to explain the social function of the picture. They show it as a courtly, ceremonial work, a formal document of ruling power. Power is to be attested by a flattering eulogy such as this picture, asserting that the Count and Countess are at the pinnacle of human prosperity. They triumph. This form of allegory, derived from a mingling of the ancient Roman general's triumph and the triumph of abstractions made popular by Petrarca, shows that, at least officially, its subjects are completely happy. This connotation is important for the date.

The two remaining sections of the diptych are the two inscriptions, one under each triumph. They have been occasionally quoted,²⁰ or paraphrased,²¹ but not studied for their significance. They are two Sapphic stanzas, reading as follows:

Clarus insigni vehitur triumpho

*Quem parem summis ducibus perhennis
Fama virtutum celebrat decenter
Sceptra tenentem.*

*Quemodum rebus tenuit secundis
Coniugis magni decorata rerum
Laude gestarum volitat per ora
Cuncta virorum.*

The chief difficulty is in the first word of the second stanza, *quemodum*, which does not exist. It seems certain that *que modum*, in two words, was intended, but botched by the letterer. In this case *que* would equal *quae*, by an abbreviation of *ae* to *e* common in Renaissance Latin.

A rough translation is as follows:

The famous one is drawn in a notable triumph,
Whom, equal to the supreme age-old captains,
The fame of his prowess fitly celebrates,
As he holds his scepter.

She who had a way with good fortune,
Adorned by the praise of the deeds
Of her great consort, how flies through the mouths
Of all men.

Suggestive differences are at once apparent. The Count's inscription describes the picture above and is in the present tense; the Countess' is very general and in the past tense. Very striking is the statement that the Countess was prosperous. It tempts one to search for more recent misfortunes in her biography, until a curious fact obtrudes itself: this inscription, announcing that the Countess has been fortunate, appears in a picture whose function is to inform of her supreme fortune in an official document; the whole ceremonial picture is a statement of this. How can one reconcile these statements of of fortune in the present and past? There is one inevitable solution:

when the stanza was written and the triumph painted, the Countess was dead.

Once this appears, confirmations group themselves about it. The author of the stanzas may be reconstructed among the many hack writers of occasional Latin verses who populated the court of Urbino.²² He was a minor humanist when the cultivation of a polished Latin style was the chief occupation of minor humanists, whether anything was said in that style or not. The best method of acquiring such a style was thought to be in imitating Cicero. But he, unfortunately for the author of the stanzas, wrote no poetry. He did, however, often quote it, and it happens that the last phrases of the Countess' stanza are an echo of such a quotation in one of Cicero's popular works, the *Tusculan Disputations*, from one of his favorite poets, Ennius. Ennius wrote: "Let no one arrange an elaborate funeral for me or wail over my tomb. Why? I fly alive through the mouths of the living."²³ This is an epitaph which Ennius wrote for himself. The fact that it is an epitaph confirms the idea that the poem echoing it was an "epitaph" - in the widest sense. It is hardly possible that this is a coincidence. The humanist author, in view of the conventions of his time, must have known the *Disputations* well.²⁴

It has been suggested that part of the function of the diptych was official flattery. The portrait of the Count flatters him, by concealing his blind eye and doubtless in other ways no longer ascertainable; of the Countess it has been said that she has lost her girlish freshness,²⁵ and in the phrase of Adolfo Venturi, now particularly striking, her face is "a waxen death mask".²⁶ Again, the Count's inscription flatters him, but the Countess' flatters the Count. This is a minor confirmation that the Countess was no longer there to be flattered.

The meaning of all these points is that a new *terminus post quem*

for the diptych may be fixed at July 6, 1472, the date of the Countess' death.²⁷ It thus becomes the latest universally accepted work of Piero.

In an attempt to fix a closer date one is on less sure ground, but several factors may be noted. The painting is a memorial, and like most memorials its execution is likely to have followed soon on the occasion for its existence, especially since it is so small. The documents of Piero's activity at this time are too few for any help from that quarter, though it is reasonably certain that he was blind for years before his death in 1492.²⁸ If more knowledge of his travels were to come to light, it would be of little certain value. A picture so small could well be ordered from a distance; Piero would hardly go to Urbino to see the Countess, and many other portraits of Federigo existed, probably including earlier ones by Piero. The suggestion above on the precedence of medals might be taken literally at this point.

A closer date, as well as a clearer idea of the type to which the diptych belongs, may, however, be inferred from the examination of the same codex which contains the poems of Ferabo, Vaticanus Urbinatis Latinus 1193.²⁹ This manuscript was written out by Federigo Veterano, the Count's librarian, after the Countess' death - since its first contents are funeral sermons and letters of condolence - and before 1474, when the Count became a Duke, since the first 169 of its 230 folios are decorated with the monogram FC, the last folios apparently not at all. The first part of the book contains two funeral orations, sixteen letters of condolence from states and notable men, and twenty epitaphs by various humanists, all lamenting with stilted obsequiousness the death of the Countess.³⁰ They had reason to lament her, for she had been a somewhat learned patron of letters. Her tutor was the humanist Filetico, who lived at the court of Urbino until 1467, afterwards corresponding with the Count and Countess. In a dialogue of his in which the Countess and her brother are stock characters, one of the debated subjects was the debt of the Latin language to Cicero. Filetico

wrote numerous Sapphic odes, one of which, remarks his biographer,³¹ shows knowledge of classic authors by quoting entire phrases from them. He also wrote an elegy and three epitaphs on the Countess; a part of this last production appears in the Vatican manuscript. Someone of this type planned the diptych complex and wrote the stanzas. Unfortunately only the first and last lines of each epitaph were published by Cinquini; clearly, however, they all belonged to the characteristic pedantic if well-intentioned humanism of the fifteenth century before Poliziano, which concentrated on slight details of text and allegory, worshipping the hem of the garment of the antique. It is as the uniquely genial projection of this cultural tendency that we may understand the picture of Piero della Francesca.

In view of the date of these parallel memorials, the epitaphs, there seems little doubt that the portrait dates in the years 1472-3. Stylistic investigation, of course impossible at the moment, is naturally necessary before any date can be made certain. Due credit must be given to Pietro Toesca,³² who, unlike almost all other scholars, considered the diptych of late date - at least several years after the completion of the Arezzo cycle in 1466 - on stylistic grounds alone; and I hope this paper may stimulate more detailed investigation on similar lines when that becomes feasible.

CREIGHTON E. GILBERT

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Notes

- * My thanks are due to Dr. Edgar Wind of the Warburg Institute for suggestions on the allegory; to Professor Robert S. Rogers of Duke University for pointing out the epitaph of Ennius; and especially to Professor Richard Offner of New York University for valuable specific comments.
- 1. 18½ x 13 in. (47 x 33 cm.) for each portrait, or for each triumph including its inscription. See Balniel and Clark, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Italian Art*, London, 1931, I, 41, also for the history of the picture.
- 2. Dennistoun, J., *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino*, ed. E. Hutton, London and New York, 1909, I, 122.
- 3. *A New History of Painting in Italy*, London, II (1866), 545-6.
- 4. Venturi, A., *Storia dell' Arte italiana*, Milano, VII-1, (1911) 338-40, 435-6; VII-2 (1913), 124-5.
- 5. E. g., Weisbach, W., *Repertorium fuer Kunstwissenschaft*, XXII, (1899), p. 75; Waters, W., *Piero della Francesca*, London, 1907, p. 74; Marini-Franceschi, E., *Piero della Francesca*, 1912, p. 152.
- 6. Witting, R., *Piero dei Franceschi*, Strasbourg, 1898, quoted by Van Marle, R., *Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, The Hague, XI (1929), 26-8.
- 7. Cruttwell, M., *Guide to the Collections of the Florentine Galleries*, Florence, 1907, p. 85, mistakenly dates the marriage 1459.
- 8. Van Marle, *loc. cit.*

9. Venturi, A., *Piero della Francesca*, Florence, 1921-2, p. 56. Cf. *post*, p. 7.
10. Dr. Guido Schoenberger also kindly confirms this.
11. Cinquini, A., *Il codice Vaticano Urbinate Latino 1193, Documenti ed appunti per la storia letteraria d'Italia nel quattrocento*, (Rome?), n. d.
12. *De vita et morte illustris D. Baptistae Sfortiae Comitissae Urbini, canzone di Ser Gaugello della Pergola*, opuscolo per nozze, Rome, 1905, Appendix.
13. *L'Arte*, IX (1906), 56.
14. See Appendix to this paper, where I attempt to prove the improbability of this date.
15. Dennistoun, *op.cit.*, I, 217-19; Graber, H., *Piero della Francesca*, Basel, 1922, pp. 25-6.
16. E. g., Venturi, A., *Storia*, VII-1 (1911) p. 435; Graber, *loc. cit.*; Longhi, R., *Piero della Francesca*, trans. L. Penlock, London and New York, 1930, p. 167; Del Vita, A., *Piero della Francesca*, Florence, 1928, p. 8; Offner, R., in *Medieval Studies in Honor of A. Kingsley Porter*, Cambridge, 1939, I, 208, note 3.
17. Berenson, B., *Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, London, 1897, p. 168.
18. Pichi, G., *Vita e opere di Piero della Francesca*, San Sepolcro, 1892; Schmarsow, *Giovanni Santi*, Berlin, 1887; - quoted by Cinquini, *De vita et morte*, *loc. cit.*

19. The opinion of Van Marle, *loc. cit.*, and Toesca, P., in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, s. v. Piero.
20. Cruttwell, *loc. cit.*; Marini-Franceschi., *loc. cit.*
21. Graber, *loc. cit.*
22. Discussed in Dennistoun, *op. cit.*, II, Ch. 25.
23. I, xv, 34: *Nemo me lacrumis decoret nec funera fletu Faxit. Cur? Volito vivus per ora vivum.*
24. It is interesting that the epitaph occurred at once to Professor Rogers, to whom I referred the Sapphic stanza; it is also quoted for the use of *volito* in standard modern lexicons.
25. Cinquini, in *L'Arte*, *loc. cit.*
26. Venturi, A., *Piero della Francesca*, *loc. cit.*
27. Dennistoun, *op. cit.*, I, 214.
28. Longhi, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-3
29. The plan of this manuscript is published by Cinquini, *Il Codice*, 1193.
30. Dennistoun, *op. cit.*, I, 216, mentions other orations in six Vatican mss.

31. Pecci, B., 'Contributo per la storia degli umanisti nel Lazio' *Archivio della Societa Romana di storia patria*, XIII, 468-525 'Martino Filetico'. For the career of another humanist author of one of the epitaphs, see Weiss, R., 'Cornelio Vitelli in France and England', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, II (1938-9), 219ff.
32. Toesca, *loc. cit.*

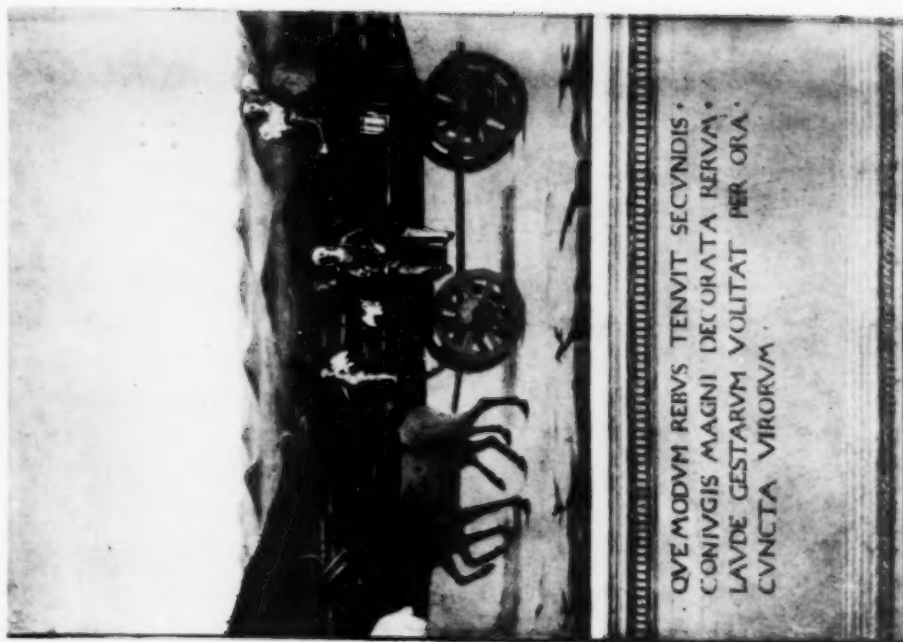
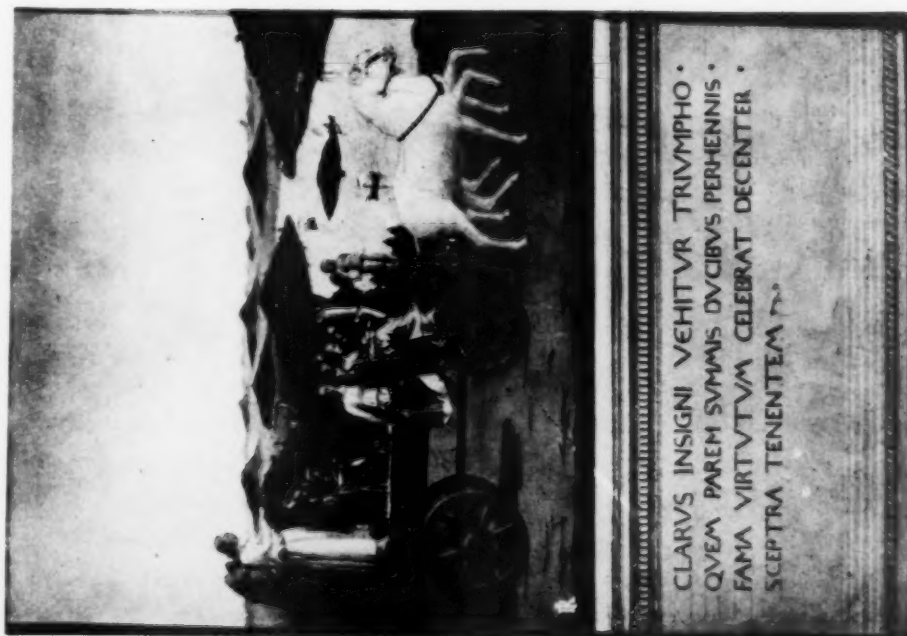
Adolfo Cinquini's demonstration that the poem of Ferabo was written in 1466 is as follows in the Appendix to his pamphlet *De Vita et Morte*: the records of the University of Perugia show that Ferabo was lecturer on Poetry there for the years 1467-70. A poem by the rival Perugian humanist Paolo Marsi warns the youth of Perugia against Ferabo, calling him a fugitive from various cities, most recently Urbino. Thus Ferabo was in Urbino in 1466 and not in 1469, the other date which had seemed most probable for the portrait. Now if Ferabo had really been driven out of Urbino, Veterano, the Count's librarian, never would have copied his poem about the portrait, along with five other poems of his, into the volume of complimentary poems addressed to the Count which he was compiling in 1472-4. (For this date see p. 46.) Thus Ferabo was not prevented on that ground from returning to Urbino in 1470. Yet, he was certainly in Urbino earlier, and only possibly later.

For that reason the earlier date for the poem would still seem more probable until one notes the subject matter of another of his six poems in Veterano's volume: Federigo's ducal palace. Rome, it reads, surpassed Babylon and the Pyramids, but the Count has surpassed Rome. It mentions specific elements like 'tectae' and 'porticus'. Now Federigo began a rather modest palace on his ascension, but this is not the famous one, alone comparable with Roman buildings, partly built by Laurana and partly decorated by Francesco di Giorgio, and of which Lorenzo the Magnificent requested a model. Moreover, several other humanists wrote eulogistic poems about this palace. Its principal historian (Budinich, *Il Palazzo ducale d'Urbino*, 1904, p. 11ff.) writes that its definitive construction was in the years 1465-80 - it is hard to understand how Ferabo could mention 'tectae' in 1466. Of other poems on it, Budinich writes that the earliest is probably shortly after 1474 (*op. cit.*, p. 42), and oddly enough, Cinquini himself, before his dating of the portrait poem in 1466, dates another poem on the palace, by Collenuccio, 1474. Thus, Ferabo's palace poem probably dates only

shortly before the compiling of the codex and can hardly date 1466. Now there can be little doubt that Ferabo's two poems are companion pieces; they are adjacent in the manuscript, they have the same length and meter. Cinquini, not thinking of a late date for the portrait, slurred over this point, and any mention of Ferabo's palace poem was omitted from the *L'Arte* version.

That the poem and portrait correspond seems untenable to me. However, after the Countess' death her omission from the poem would be a little less surprising; and since we arrive by different routes for poem and picture, it is possible that the two correspond. I include this appendix in the hope that the many scholars who think that such correspondence exists may be led to agree, even if for a different reason, with the date proposed above for the diptych.





Piero della Francesca, Triumph of the Count and Countess of Urbino,
 Reverse of a diptych, each half 18½ x 14 inches, Florence, Uffizi.



THE SUBJECT MATTER OF DUERER'S JABACH ALTAR*

by

Marguerite L. Brown

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In the Städelische Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, and the Wallraf-Richartz museum in Cologne are two panels from the so-called Jabach Altar painted by Albrecht Dürer in the first decade of the XVI century (*fig. 1*).¹ Although the two fragments have different shapes, it is evident that they were once a single painting, since the subject matter of one is continued in the other. This idea is substantiated by the fact that there is an early XVI century engraving in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinet which shows the Jabach Altar as a single panel (*fig. 2*).

The entire picture represents a scene from the life of Job. He is seen in the Frankfurt panel, seated on the straw-strewn ground, his arms resting on his raised knees, and his head supported by his left hand. He is nude, save for a small loin-cloth, and his naked body is covered with sores. Behind him half kneels, half stands a woman, probably his wife, who is in the act of pouring water from a wooden bucket over his back. A burning house, no doubt the home of Job with the "fire of God fallen from Heaven,"² is visible in the distance behind them.

The Cologne panel, which should be placed to the right of the Frankfurt panel, shows two musicians, gaily dressed as minstrels, who stand facing the sick Job and play to him, a youth on a flute, and a middle-aged man on a small drum. Winkler has indentified the latter as a self-portrait of Dürer.³ Behind them, in the distance, are mounted men who may be interpreted as the Sabeans and Chaldeans since they are driving animals before them.⁴

Aside from problems of dating and authorship which have not been completely solved, there has been discussion about and interest displayed in the unusual subject matter of the Jabach Altar.⁵ Although it has always been recognized as a scene of Job, the several iconographical interpretations have been confused and conflicting. The reason for this is that, since the earliest Christian times, interpretations of Job have been extremely varied, the Book of Job itself being full of con-

traditions. Among others, St. Jerome *contra Johannem Hierosolymitanum* n. xxx,⁶ interpreted Job as a prophet of the Resurrection, because of the lines of Job 19: 25-26: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God." For this reason Job was often introduced into the decoration of sarcophagi and catacombs.⁷

But at the same time there were those who did not accept him as a prophet, because of Job 14, in which the sick man finds comfort in the thought that he will die and his misery will be forgotten. Out of this interpretation grew the idea of Job as a symbol of the misery and patience of Christ. For this reason it became common to include Job's wife in the representations,¹⁰ to indicate that he was being tempted by her to give up his patient attitude and faith in God.

During the Middle Ages, when every artistic representation was endowed with a Christian meaning, Job had several functions. He was still represented as a prophet of the Resurrection and Reincarnation in the North transept of Reims, where he appears in the so-called S. Sixtus portal, which is next to, and undoubtedly to be read with, the Last Judgment portal.¹¹ He also appears in the North transept of Chartres, on the left side of the Life of the Virgin, while the Nativity is on the right.¹² In this case he is represented, not entirely as a prophet, but in connection with the Life of the Virgin, because of the line in Job 10: 12: "Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation has preserved my spirit." It is for the same reason that the head of Job appears next to the Visitation in the *Biblia Pauperum*. However, that Job was a symbol of the misery of Christ had not been forgotten, for in both these examples he appears not only with his wife, but with the devil tormenting him as well.

As Hartt¹³ has pointed out, during the Renaissance Job's role as a prophet was almost entirely suppressed. He was usually represented

as the supreme sufferer, and therefore a perfect example of Christian patience. In the *Biblia Pauperum* he appears next to the Crowning of Thorns, and in the *Speculum*, next to the Flagellation, where he is beaten by the devil while his wife argues with him. The mystery plays, particularly popular in the North, also include the Job-Satan episode.¹⁴

Because of this general trend of the Job representations during the XV and XVI centuries, scholars have come to the almost unanimous conclusion that the Jabach altar is an illustration of Job's patience being tried by two youths and his wife, and that the source of this scene is either a lost mystery play, the imagination of the artist,¹⁵ or Job 30: 1 and 9: "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision... And now I am their song, yea, I am their byword."¹⁶ Unquestionably, here is an example of the supreme patience of Job; but that it is based on the Bible is unlikely. It seems improbable that the mention of "song" was ever understood as music, when it is merely a figure of speech meaning that the young men teased Job. Likewise, it is impossible that the scene originated in the imagination of Duerer, since there still exist at least eleven similar representations by other masters.

Weisbach¹⁸ mentions a late XV century German woodcut in which a woman brandishes a spoon at Job, who is being beaten by a devil, while a man in the background plays a flute. Kauffmann¹⁹ illustrates two Saxon panels of the early XVI century. One, a predella in Bitterfeld cathedral, shows Job seated on the ground before three musicians, while his wife throws water at him. The other, a panel in the Marienkirche, Frankfurt a. d. Oder, shows the same scene, with the addition that Job holds out a gold coin to the musicians.²⁰ The miniature of Job for the prayerbook of Duke Wilhelm IV of Bavaria, painted in 1535 by Glockendann,²¹ does not show Job's wife pouring water. It does, however, include a new detail, the image of God in the sky watching the scene.

The same subject was known at least as early as 1485 in Flanders, since it appears about that time in an altarpiece in the Cologne Museum, painted by the Master of the St. Barbara Legend (*fig. 3*).²² The entire episode of Job and the musicians is depicted. In the foreground two men play to Job, while a third reaches out his hand for something the sick man is giving him. Job, picking at his scabs with one hand, is evidently giving the players gold with the other. In the middle distance, the same players are telling Job's wife something which so angers her that she scolds her husband. This is shown in a small scene at the right. Although she does not throw water at him, she is equipped to do so, since she carries a small bucket.

In the Viscount Lee Collection in Richmond is a simplified version of the same subject, a panel by Lucas van Leyden, of about 1510,²³ which does not include the wife, but does contain the exchange of gold.²⁴ From the circle of Hieronymus Bosch come two panels, one in the Douai Museum (*fig. 4*), the other in the Max de Coninck Collection, Diegham-
lez-Bruxelles. These panels are extremely similar, for they both show a haloed Job seated upon straw, holding out a gold coin to a large group of musicians, while his angry wife shakes a bunch of keys in his face. There is also an engraving after Bosch showing Job and the musicians.²⁵ But in this case the devil has been substituted for the wife.

That the scene was known in France is substantiated by the appearance of Job with three musicians in the Book of Hours by Pigouchet,²⁶ in which scenes from the life of Job appear at the bottom of each page of the *Office des Morts*. Likewise, in Jean Fouquet's *Livre d'heures d'Etienne Chevalier*, at Chantilly, at the beginning of the *Office des Morts*, Job is shown with his three friends, while his wife is talking to the three musicians in the background.²⁷

Hartt²⁸ has identified as Job the figure seated under a tree in Carpaccio's *Entombment* in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum. Since Carpaccio

has included a musician directly above the figure, it may be assumed that the story was known in Italy as well as in the North.

Although the actions of the people in these examples are similar to those of the Jabach Altar, their varied positions, styles, and interpretations suggest that their source is not to be found in a painting. The origin might be found in a mystery play or a ballad carried through all of Europe by the Minnesingers, troubadours, and minstrels. Such a play, unfortunately, does not exist to-day. However, John Lydgate, a monk at Bury in the XV century, writing a poem entitled *The Life of Holy Job*,²⁹ has enriched his biblical material by including the following drama, taken from a folk song. The 17th, as well as the 18th and 19th stanzas, show the emphasis placed on the patience of Job:

17

Here the blessed lorde of hevyn god omnipotent,
Vnto this holy man Job than he apperid,
And sore rebuked hym for that intente,
That he tofore tym had his wyfe cursed,
For whiche of god mercy than, mercy he axid,
And of forgevenesse of grete offence,
Of his hasty spekyng and wylfull insolence.

18

This sore syk man syttyng on this foule Dongehill
There cam mynstrelles before hym, pleying meryly,
Mony had he none to reward after his will,
But have theym the brode Scabbes of his sore body
Which turned vnto pure golde, as sayth the story,
The mynstrelles than shewid, and tolde to Job his wyfe,
That he so reward them where fore she gan to stryfe.

19

Than saying vnto Job in angre this woman,
 "To mynstrelles and players thou (y)evyst golde largely,
 But thou hidest thi gode from me lyke a false man";
 And with many seducious wordes openly,
 There hym rebuked with language most sharply,
 Job all sufferd and thout yt for the best,
 To obserue pacience and so live in rest.

It is immediately evident that the Jabach Altar, and the other examples mentioned above, are based on the same source. Like the paintings, Lydgates's poem was probably derived from a more complete ballad, or play, which may be reconstructed from the various monuments which depend upon it. As the verses indicate, it is a story of Job's patience witnessed by God (who is included in the Glockendann prayer-book). The altar of the Cologne Museum best continues the story: it shows Job paying the musicians with "the brode Scabbes of his sore Body." The scabs turned to gold are depicted in several panels, i.e. the Frankfurt a.d. Oder example, the two paintings from the circle of Bosch, and Lucas van Leyden's picture. But to return to the Cologne Museum altar: the musicians, when leaving Job meet his wife who is bringing him water in a small bucket. They show her the gold her husband has given them, which angers her since he has given her none. She accuses him of being dishonest (in the Glockendann prayerbook); she shakes her keys at him in anger (in the Bosch panels); and finally, in a desperate attempt to vex him, she throws the water at him (in the Jabach altar). But Job, because of his faith in God, "observes patience and so lives in rest."

The source of the original drama is perhaps to be found in the Socrates-Xanthippe episode, recorded in Diogenes Laertius.³⁰ Xanthippe, angry at her husband for sitting in meditation instead of working, threw water at him, just as Job's wife did, and for a similar reason.

In contrast to her are the minstrels, who try to soothe Job by their music, which had the power to cure the sick and melancholic, as the story of David and Saul testifies.³¹ No doubt this was still the belief, since legend tells that when Hugo van der Goes had an attack of insanity the doctor ordered monks to play to him.

The combination of these two ideas in a story of Job served originally to emphasize his Christian faith and patience. However, the surviving representations show that the dramatic elements were those which appealed to the imagination of the artists. Lucas van Leyden and the Master of the St. Barbara Legend were interested in the miracle of the gold coin. Glockendann and the followers of Bosch were more interested in the violent action of the wife, although the former has also emphasized the miracle of God's conversation with Job by including Him in the scene.

Duerer alone has emphasized the characteristics of Job himself, rather than any miracle or dramatic action. He has left out the exchange of money, and has reduced the violence of the wife to a simple act. The three auxiliary figures, who direct their gaze toward Job, express the conflict in Job's mind. The musicians, by their playing, have the power to calm Job, and thus express his patience; while his wife expresses his desire to rebel against his fate, to "curse God and die".³²

To emphasize his essential characteristics, Duerer has given him the attributes of Melancholia,³³ i.e. he is an old man, seated on the ground, and with his head resting on his hand. Furthermore, his face is very similar to that of "Melancholia" in Duerer's woodcut *Die Philosophie* from the *Book of Celts*, made in Nurnberg in 1502.³⁴ In another of his early woodcuts, entitled *Maennerbad* (fig. 5), Duerer includes six figures, four of whom Dr. Wind has identified as the four temperaments, since they each carry some attribute, or have dis-

tinguishing characteristics³⁵. The other two figures are musicians, and direct their gaze towards the representative of Melancholia who leans his head upon one hand in meditation.

Lucas Cranach, in a painting entitled *Die Melancholia* (fig. 6) in the Volz Collection, The Hague, uses the same symbolism. Melancholia is seated in the foreground making witch-hazel, an indication of her insanity and association with Black magic.³⁶ Behind her are the supernatural beings with which she is in league. Around her are grouped a crowd of small putti. These are probably the symbols of her conflicting spirit, since half of them are performing a gay little dance, while the other half are sleeping at the feet of two of their company, who play a flute and a drum, and might be miniatures of the minstrels in the Jabach Altar.

Were the subject of the Jabach Altar the 'Derision of Job', as it has so long been considered, Duerer would not have portrayed himself as the drummer. He has used a popular story which contrasts the derision of his wife with the sympathy of the musicians and at the same time expresses Job's melancholy mood.³⁷

DUERER'S JABACH ALTAR

Notes

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- * The subject of this paper was suggested to me by Dr. Erwin Panofsky, to whom I am also indebted for many valuable suggestions.
- 1. Woelfflin, Heinrich, *Die Kunst Albrecht Duerers*, Muenchen, 1905, p. 115, believes the Jabach Altar to be a workshop piece painted between 1503 and 1505. Weizsacker, Heinrich, *Katalog der Gemaelde-Gallerie des Staedelschen Kunstinstituts in Frankfurt am Main*, Frankfurt a. M., 1900, analyzes the altar and comes to the conclusion that it was painted by Duerer himself, before 1510. Tietze, H. and Tietze-Conrat, E., *Kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke Albrecht Duerers, der junge Duerer bis zur Venezianischen Reise im Jahre 1505*, Augsburg, 1928-29, k. *247-48, agree with the latter. Winkler, Ed., *Duerer, des Meister Gemaelde, Kupferstiche, und Holzschnitte*, Berlin, n.d., Pl. XXIV, dates it 1500.
- 2. Job 1: 16.
- 3. Winkler, *op. cit.*, p. 410.
- 4. Job 1: 15 and 17.
- 5. Heinrich Weizsaecker's 'Der Sogenannte Jabachsche Altar und die Dichtung des Buches Hiob', *Kunstwissenschaftliche Beitrage, August Schmarsow gewidmet zum Fuenfzigsten Semester*, (1907) 153-162, and Hans Kauffmann's 'Albrecht Duerers Dreikonigs-altar', *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch*, X (1938), 166-178, are the only publications which deal exclusively with this problem. However, solutions have also been offered by Weisbach, Werner, 'L'histoire de Job dans les arts', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, (1936, Part 2), 102-112; Pigler Andreas, 'Sokrates in der Kunst der Neuzeit', *Die Antike, Zeitschrift fur Kunst und Kultur des Klassischen Altertums*, XIV (1938), 281-294; and Hartt, Frederick, 'Carpaccio's Meditation on the Passion', *Art Bulletin*, XXII, no. 1 (1940), 25-35.

6. Referred to in Cabrol, Fernand, and Leclerc, Henri, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* VII, Paris, 1927, pp. 2554-2570.
7. Job appears on such sarcophagi as that of Junius Bassus in the Vatican, reproduced in Garrucci, P. Raffaele, *Storia della Arte Cristiana nei primi otto secoli della chiesa*, Prato, 1879, Pl. CCCXXII, n. 2, no. 40 in the Pio-Lateranense Museum, reproduced in Marucchi, Orazio, *I monumenti del Museo Cristiano Pio-Lateranense*, Milan, 1910, Pl. V. n. 6, and one from the Vespasian temple of Brescia, now in the Brescia Museum, reproduced in Garrucci, P. R., *op. cit.*, Pl. CCCXXIII, n. 3.
8. The III century Domitilla catacombs illustrated in Wilpert, Giuseppe, *Roma sotterranea, Le pitture delle Catacombe Romane*, Roma, 1903, Pl. CCXXVI, n. 2, include the figure of Job, seated on a small stool in an attitude of meditation.
9. John Chrysostomus, *Epist. ad Olympiadem diaconissam*, n. 8.
10. His wife is a symbol of Job's patience because of the passage in Job 2:9, "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." The wife appears even in the earliest Job representations.
11. Gardner, Arthur, *Mediaeval sculpture in France*, Cambridge, 1931, Pls. LXX-LXXI.
12. *Le Cathédrale de Chartres*, Edition "Tels", 1934, Pl. XLI.

13. Hartt, F., *op. cit.*, p. 29. However, there are examples which still show Job as a prophet; for example in Phillippe Pigouchet's *Heures a l'usage de Lion*, 1496, and *Heures a l'usage de Rome*, 1497, both in the Pierpont Morgan Library, he appears next to the *Offices des Morts*. In the Prayerbook of Duke Wilhelm IV of Bavaria, painted by Albrecht Glockendann in 1535, (Vienna, Bib. Nat. Ms. 1880, fol. 83v, reproduced in *Bulletin de la société française de réproduction de manuscrits à peintures*, XXI (1938), Pl. XXXVIIIa) is a scene of Job, very similar to the Jabach Altar. It appears above the Mass of the Dead, while to the left and right of it are the Last Sacraments and a burial scene. These examples were suggested to me by Dr. Panofsky.
14. Rothschild, Baron James de, 'Le mystère du viel testament, V', *Société des anciens textes français*, Pub. 12 (1885), i-iii, 1-51.
15. Weizsaecker, H., 'Der Sogenannte Jabachsche Altar und die Dichtung des Buches Hiob', *op. cit.*, note 3, believes that all Northern representations of Job depend on mystery plays. Kauffmann, *op. cit.*, believes the Jabach altar to be part of the altar of the *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi, because of the association of Old Testament figures with the Nativity cycle in mystery plays. However, St. Augustine, who discusses Job as a prophet in *De fide resurrectionis*, does not include him in his Apocrypha, upon which the Procession of the Prophets is based.
16. Weisbach, *op. cit.*, 108.
17. Hartt, *op. cit.*, 31, note 1.
18. Weisbach, *loc. cit.*; I have been unable to find an illustration of the woodcut mentioned.

19. Kauffmann, *op. cit.*, Pl. CXII and fig. 109.
20. Dr. Panofsky has suggested that the Bitterfeld predella is dependant upon Duerer. This is also Kauffmann's theory. However, it could as easily depend upon the Marienkirche panel, which could not derive from Duerer, since it includes the miracle of the gold coin, a detail which the Jabach Altar omits.
21. See note 13, above.
22. Friedlaender, Max J., 'Der Meister der Barbaralegende', *Jahrbuch fuer Kunstwissenschaft* (1924-25), 20-25, illustrates and attributes this painting to the Master of the St. Barbara Legend, and dates it around 1485. It is interesting to note that the Job panel forms one wing of an altar which also includes the Visitation scene, showing that the Old Testament figure was still associated with the Life of the Virgin, as he had been in the Chartres tympanum and the *Biblia Pauperum*.
23. *Idem*, *Die Altniederlaendische Malerei*, X, Berlin, 1925, Pl. LXX.
24. Lafond, Paul, *Hieronymus Bosch, son art, son influence, ses disciples*, Brussels, 1914, Pls. XXXII and XXXIII. The two panels are so similar that Lafond believes they are by the same hand. However, since the Coninck Collection panel is a simplified version of the Douai painting, it is probably a copy.
25. Lafond, *op. cit.*, Pl. LXXXVIII.
26. See note 13, above.
27. Martin, Henry, *Les Fouquet de Chantilly*, Paris, n. d. fig. 26.

28. Hartt, F., *op. cit.*, p. 27. and fig. 3. It is possible that Duerer partially received his inspiration for the Jabach Altar from Carpaccio, for his Job is extremely similar to the one in Carpaccio's *Entombment*. Here, as in the Jabach Altar, Job is seated on the ground scantily clad; his left arm rests on his raised knee; and his head is supported by his hand. Duerer's Job differs from Carpaccio's in that he faces to the right instead of to the left, and that he is bald. But Hartt has pointed out that Duerer's so-called *St. Onuphrius* in the Kunsthalle, Bremen is a direct copy of the Job in Bellini's *S. Giobbe Altar*. In this instance also, Duerer has reversed the figure, and has omitted the luxuriant hair.
29. Quoted in MacCracken, H.N. '*Lydatiana, the Life of Holy Job*'. *Archiv fuer das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, LXV, Vol. 126, N.S. 26, (1911), 365-370. This is a manuscript in the Philipps Collection, Thirlestaine House, No. 8299. It is composed of 26 stanzas, each bearing a Latin heading of which the stanza is an explanation. Because stanza 18 is the only one with no heading, MacCracken concludes that it was taken from a folksong.
30. This is Pigler's theory for the source of the Jabach Altar. He quotes the passage *op. cit.*, p. 284.
31. I Samuel 16:23: "'And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.'"
32. Job 2:9.
33. Panofsky, Erwin, and Saxl, Fritz, *Duerers 'Melancholia.I'*, Leipzig, 1923. This theory was first suggested by Kauffmann, *op. cit.*, who compares Duerer's Job to his *Melancholia.I* and to his Man of

Sorrows on the frontispiece of the Small Woodcut Passion.

34. Winkler, *op. cit.*, Pl. CCXLIX.

35. Wind, Edgar, 'Duerer's "Maennerbad": a Dionysian Mystery', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, II (1938-39), 269-271.

36. Insanity and magic have long been closely associated. People who behave queerly are either "touched" or "bewitched"; and it is common to speak of a "mad genius."

37. According to Wind, *loc. cit.*, the representative of Melancholia in the *Maennerbad* is in such a state of mind because of physical conditions. For this reason he listens to the music, in the hope that it will bring him a purge by water. The interpretation rests on the pun of the German word *hahn*. Possibly Duerer had this Dionysiac symbolism in mind when he painted the Jabach Altar. In the original drama the act of the wife pouring water on Job took place only after she had talked to the musicians who had already been given the gold. Yet in Duerer's scene the minstrels are still playing to Job, while the wife pours her water. This fits in perfectly with Wind's explanation of Melancholia, *op. cit.*, p. 270; "the melancholy one listens to music and hopes for water."



Frankfurt a. M., Städel
Kunstinstitut



Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum

Fig. 1. Albrecht Dürer, Jabach Altar.



Fig. 2. Engr. after Albrecht Dürer, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett



Fig. 3. Master of the St. Barbara Legend, Ordeals of Job, Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum



Fig. 4. School of Hieronymus Bosch, Ordeals of Job, Douai Museum.



Fig. 5. Albrecht Dürer,
Die Männerbad, Woodcut.

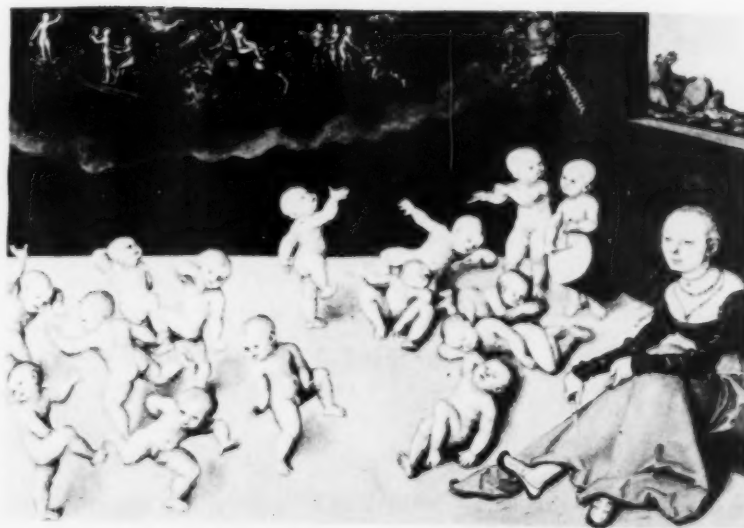


Fig. 6. Lucas Cranach, Die Melancholie,
The Hague, Volz Collection.



MANIERA, THE HISTORY OF A WORD*

by

Marco Treves

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The word *maniera* has in Italian many meanings, several of which are especially connected with the Fine Arts. A rapid survey of them may be of interest to the art historian and facilitate the understanding of the Italian sources. These various meanings were not introduced through arbitrary decisions and abrupt innovations of individual writers, but evolved naturally, gradually, and logically from one another, as I shall endeavour to show. Each of them was already in use in the spoken language before it was employed by the writers, and each had already been employed in literature before it attracted the attention of the linguists and makers of dictionaries. It should be borne in mind that, as the new meanings appeared, the old ones were not discarded, so that often they all occur in the same texts.

Common meaning of the word. The most usual and ancient meaning of the word *maniera* in Italian is the manner, way, or fashion, in which a work is done, a person behaves, a problem is solved. Thus it is roughly an equivalent of *modo* and *guisa*, and translates the Latin *mos* and *modus*. A good example is the following from Boccaccio (1353): *E veggendo alcune femmine alla guisa di Maiolica ballare, essa alla maniera alessandrina ballò* (And seeing some women dance in the fashion of Mayorca, she danced in the manner of Alexandria).¹

Maniera as the painter's term: Cennini. When the artists of the Renaissance acquired a clearer awareness of the nature of their art, and developed a more precise language, *maniera* came in handy to denote: (a) the individual style of the artist (painter, sculptor, or architect); (b) the common style of a nation or of an age. Manner signified manner of working.

Maniera appears for the first time as the artist's technical term in a passage of Cennini (ca. 1390) in which he advises the young painter to practice copying the works of some renowned master: "... and continuing from day to day it would be unnatural if you failed to pick up

something of his manner (*maniera*) and of his mien (*aria*). For if you undertake to copy today from this master, tomorrow from that, you will not acquire the manner of either."²

Ghiberti. The first writer who employed the word *maniera* in the sense of the style of an age or period was Ghiberti (ca. 1450). He says that Cimabue "followed the Greek manner (*la maniera greca*). In that manner he had very great fame in Tuscany."³ Pietro Cavallini "retains a little of the ancient manner, that is the Greek (*tiene un poco della maniera antica, cioè greca*)."⁴ Duccio "followed the Greek manner."⁵ But Giotto "introduced the new art, he abandoned the crudity of the Greeks....He introduced natural art and gentleness therewith."⁶ The ancient or Greek manner in this passage is the Byzantine style. The new art is the Renaissance. *Antica* here means vaguely old.

Architecture: Filarete. Turning to works dealing with architecture, we find that the treatise of Filarete and the anonymous life of Brunelleschi usually ascribed to Manetti do not yet use *maniera* as a technical term. They employ it promiscuously with *modo*, *usanza*, and *pratica*. Filarete, writing between 1451 and 1464, praises those who follow *la pratica e maniera antica*. Brunelleschi "revived this ancient way of building (*risuscitò questo modo antico dell'edificare*)."⁷ The writer encourages everyone to seek in building *il modo antico di fare*. He begs everyone to forsake *questa usanza moderna*. Here *pratica*, *maniera*, *modo*, and *usanza* are used as synonyms. *Antico* means Roman, and *moderno* means Gothic.

Manetti. The author of the life of Brunelleschi, sketching briefly the history of architecture, mentions *questo modo dei muramenti che si dicono alla romana e all'antica* (this way of building that is called in the Roman or ancient fashion),⁸ *il modo dello edificare antico* (the ancient way of building).⁹ The barbarians built in their own style (*secondo le loro usanze, secondo la loro maniera*).¹⁰ Charlemagne restored

for a short time the Roman manner, but again it gave way to *i modi tedeschi*, which continued until the time of Brunelleschi.¹¹

Raphael. The letter addressed to Pope Leo X in 1519 and ascribed by some to Raphael, by some to others, contains another outline of the history of architecture. There are only three styles (*maniere*) of buildings in Rome, it says: the first is the good antique, which lasted from the beginning of the Empire to the invasions of the Goths and other barbarians; the second lasted while Rome was ruled by the Goths and another hundred years after; the third since then to the writer's days.

The buildings of the Roman Emperors are the best (*fatti con più bella maniera*). Those of the times of the Goths are without any charm or style (*privi di ogni grazia, senza maniera alcuna*). The modern ones do not yet equal the excellence of antiquity, although recently they have greatly improved, and Bramante has come very near to it.

This letter mentions also the decline of sculpture from the *perfetta maniera* of the early Emperors to the *malissima maniera* of Diocletian and Constantine.¹²

Maniera in Vasari. In Vasari's *Lives*, *maniera* has a special importance, because the evolution of the styles of art is one of the chief connecting threads that link together the vast number of factual data contained therein. It was Vasari's intention to compose something more than a bare list of artists and an inventory of their works, or even a collection of separate biographies. He intended to write a history in the classical sense of the word, in which facts should be related with one another through the principle of causation, arranged in their dramatic development, and judged according to their moral value and their practical consequences. He intended to explain the causes of the improvement and decline of the arts, which he conceived as an alter-

nation of good and bad styles.¹³ Thus the analysis of the styles serves the purpose of establishing the relation of each artist to his master, to his age, and to his country, and is used to evaluate his merit and historical significance.

Hence the importance of the concept of *maniera*, which Vasari neither invented nor modified, but employed extensively and precisely. I shall divide Vasari's uses of this word according to the nouns or adjectives by which it is accompanied: (a) styles of periods or countries; (b) styles of individual artists; (c) styles with various other qualifications.

Historical styles. Vasari distinguishes the styles of various nations and periods: 'Connoisseurs,' says he, 'recognize the differences among the manners of all countries.'¹⁴ He mentions the *maniera egizia*, the *maniera etrusca*, the *buona maniera antica* (the good ancient manner of the Greeks and Romans), the *vecchia maniera greca goffa* (the clumsy old manner of the Byzantines). The division between *antica* and *vecchia* is the age of Constantine, when the capital was transferred to the East.¹⁵

Vasari, as is well known, divided the Renaissance into three periods, each of which surpassed the preceding one. By *arte moderna* he sometimes means all art since Giotto. More often, however, the style of the Trecento is the *maniera vecchia di Giotto*, and the *maniera moderna* starts with Masaccio. The most perfect is the third *maniera moderna*, which starts with Leonardo.

In architecture, the *maniera moderna* is the Renaissance, while the Gothic style is called *maniera tedesca*, *ordine tedesco*, *maniera de' Goti*.

Among the national and local schools of painting of his time, Vasari mentions the *maniera tedesca*, the *maniera fiamminga*, the *maniera*

italiana, the *maniere di Lombardia*, and the *pratica di Roma*.

Individual styles. Each artist in Vasari's *Lives* has his own peculiar manner. "Long practice teaches careful painters to recognize, as you know, the various manners of artists, just as a learned and experienced secretary recognizes the divers and varied handwritings of his colleagues, and everybody those of his closest dependants, friends, and relatives."¹⁶ Thus the analysis of manner becomes a means of recognizing authorship and of making attributions.

It is also a means of establishing the stylistic derivation of one artist from another, because, says Vasari, "it seldom happens that a studious pupil does not learn (at least in great part) the manner of his teacher."¹⁷ Some artists imitated not only their teachers, but also other contemporary or older masters whom they happened to like. For instance, Michelangelo made a bas-relief imitating the manner of Donatello. Some artists, such as Raphael, have a first, a second, and a last manner, according to the influences that they underwent.¹⁸

Sundry qualifications. *Maniera* in Vasari can also be accompanied by various epithets which qualify it critically or rhetorically. Some of them express praise or blame, and reflect the author's preferences, such as *maniera bella* (fine), *bellissima* (very fine), *buona* (good), *bonissima* (very good), *leggiadra* (graceful), *giudiziosa* (judicious), *vaga* (lovely), *maravigliosa* (wonderful), etc.; and their opposites, the *mala maniera* (ill manner), the *maniera non buona* (not good), *cattiva* (bad), *poco da lodare* (little to be praised), *bruttissima* (very ugly), *sciagurata* (wretched), etc. Others are descriptive, such as the *maniera dura* (hard), *cruda* (raw), *secca* (dry), *tagliente* (sharp); their opposites, the *maniera delicata e dolce* (delicate and sweet), *morbida e pastosa* (soft and mellow); and also the *maniera grande* (great), the *maniera minuta* (minute), the *maniera gagliarda* (vigorous), the *maniera diligente* (diligent), the *maniera chiara* (light or pale), the *maniera*

oscura (dark), the *maniera facile* (easy), the *maniera affaticata* (laboured), and the *maniera soda* (massive, in architecture).

The *maniera bella*, according to Vasari, consists in composing figures by combining the most beautiful hands, heads, bodies, and legs to be found in nature.¹⁹

Synonyms of *maniera* used by Vasari are *il modo di fare*, *il fare*, *gli andari*, *il modo dell'operare*, *il modo di dipingere*, etc.²⁰

Maniera absolutely for good style. *Maniera* is sometimes used absolutely in the sense of good style. This is a figure of speech, analogous to those whereby we say that a person has or has not manners or taste, meaning good manners and good taste, and the Latins spoke of *species*, *forma*, *formosus*, meaning beauty and beautiful, (literally: appearance, shape, shapely). We have found one example of this acceptance of the word in Raphael's letter (*senza maniera alcuna*).

Others can be found in Vasari: "He [Ghiberti] showed invention, order, manner, and draughtsmanship, so that his figures seem to move and be alive."²¹ "He [Masaccio] considered that all figures whose feet, instead of resting properly on the floor and being foreshortened, stood on tiptoe, lacked all excellence and manner in essentials."²² The masters of the Second Part of the *Lives* improved greatly the arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture "by adding to the things of the earlier ones rule, order, proportion, draughtsmanship, and manner."²³

Maniera versus the imitation of nature: Since the *maniera* or style is the personal factor of an image, the elements and features that derive from the artist's temperament, taste, habits, and training, it naturally came to be contrasted with the objective factors deriving from the nature of the things depicted. The more an artist relies on his conscious or unconscious habits, the less faithfully (it was thought)

he will imitate reality. Thus *maniera* came to mean stylization, and *manierato* or *ammanierato* to mean mannered, stylized, unnatural, unrealistic, calligraphic.

Sometimes the word had no connotation of praise or blame, as in the following sentence by Vasari: "...although in this part [i.e. hair and beard] sculptors cannot so well counterfeit nature, for they make the locks of hair massive and curly, relying more on manner than on imitation of nature (*più di maniera che d'imitazione naturale*)."²⁴

Here *maniera* (stylization) is a necessity, but more often it has an unfavourable connotation: "When artists, in the works they make, seek no more than to imitate the manner of their teacher, or of some other eminent [master] whose way of working they like, either in the attitudes of the figures, or in the expressions of the heads, or in the way drapery is folded, and study such [manners] exclusively; although with time and study they achieve resemblance [of their own works to those they admire], yet by this [means] alone they never attain perfection in art. For it can very clearly be seen that he seldom passes ahead, who always walks behind; because the imitation of nature is halted in the manner of that artist who has turned his long practice into a manner.

"For imitation [of nature] is the art of doing exactly whatever you are doing, according to the most beautiful among the things of nature, taking her unmixed, without the manner of your master, or of others who likewise reduced to a manner the things they took from nature.

"And, though the works of eminent masters may look natural or similar [to nature], it is impossible (no matter how much diligence is employed) to make them so similar that they be as nature herself. And even by selecting the best [works of the masters], it is impossible to compose so perfect a figure as to make art surpass her.

"And if this be so, it follows therefrom that things taken from her make paintings and sculptures perfect; and that he who studies closely only the manners of the artists, and not natural bodies and things, will necessarily make his works inferior both to nature and to those of him from whom he takes his manner.

"Accordingly, we have seen that many artists, who have not applied themselves to study anything but the works of their masters, and have neglected nature, have failed to learn them entirely, and have not surpassed their master; but [on the contrary] they have done wrong to the wit they have received; for, had they studied both manner and natural things, they would have borne better fruits, in their works, than they did."²⁵

"The knowledge pertaining to his [Perugino's] art was reduced so much to a manner, that he gave the same mien to all his figures."²⁶

"And in everything he [Giorgione] did there, he took care that it should aim at the target of living things, and not at any imitation of manner."²⁷

The opposition of "manner" and "nature" is parallel to the opposition of "practice" and "diligence", which also is frequent in the writers of the Renaissance; and *tirar di pratica*,²⁸ like *tirar di maniera* (i.e. to work swiftly and boldly, relying on one's practice and stylistic habits), is the method used by Mannerists, as opposed to the diligence and scientific naturalism of the Renaissance.

However, it is not always blamed. In Borghini (1584), who is influenced by the Mannerists, *tirar di maniera* seems to be the usual way of the good masters, and diligence the exception. He quotes the remark that, though the head of a statue by Sansovino be fine, "it seems that those of the profession would wish it to have more *maniera*"; and

replies: "A good master is not always obliged to *tirar di maniera*; he can sometimes show that he can do finished and delicate works."²⁹

Armenini (1587) blames both those artists who paint from life without the help of a manner formed upon the antique,³⁰ and those who paint *di pura maniera*, without a living model and without diligence.³¹ He says that *maniera* alone is not sufficient,³² and concludes that "besides seeking the best and most perfect things of nature, one should also add a good manner, ... because, blending the latter with a good model, one can make a composition of excellent beauty."³³

The antimanneristic reaction. The reaction against mannerism started (a) with Caravaggio, who was considered by most of his contemporaries as an utter realist, (b) with the school of Bologna, which based art on the imitation of various masters and also of nature. They returned to a modified form of "diligence." Among these painters and their admirers the word *maniera* acquired a more precise, disparaging sense, denoting the mannerist style, and gave birth later to its derivatives *ammanierato*, *manierista*, *manierismo*, all disparaging.

Most writers of the seventeenth century ascribe to the Carracci the merit of accomplishing a sort of Hegelian synthesis of realism and mannerism. This view appears first in a confused form in a letter by Vincenzo Giustiniani, who, enumerating the twelve ways of painting, mentions as tenth, *dipignere di maniera* (i.e. to paint without a model, relying on practice and on imagination); as eleventh, to paint with natural objects before one's eyes; and as twelfth (the most perfect), the combination of the tenth and the eleventh.³⁴

More clearly this dialectic explanation of the history of painting appears in Bellori (1672),³⁵ Malvasia (1678),³⁶ Baldinucci (1681),³⁷ and Félibien (1688),³⁸ who all blame Caravaggio as an indiscriminating imitator of reality, blame Giuseppe d'Arpino as a mannerist neglectful of

nature, and praise the Carracci as the initiators of the good style which avoids either fault.

The first definition of *maniera* in the sense of mannerism appears in Bellori: "And the artists, abandoning the study of nature, corrupted art with the *maniera*, or (if you prefer) fantastic idea, based on practice and not on imitation [of nature]."³⁹ In the next sentence he calls it a vice, and mentions those painters "who started the *maniera*." Thus *maniera* becomes a quality (and a bad one) of a certain group of painters, and no longer of all artists.

Baldinucci explains: "There have been other artists, whom we call *di maniera* or *ammanierati* (mannered), who, having formed certain ideas of faces according to their whims, not only have not selected the most beautiful that nature can produce, but have not even imitated what she produces ordinarily; and these deserve every blame."⁴⁰ And elsewhere: "And in every other painter [except Michelangelo, Raphael, and Andrea del Sarto] we may notice now and then something of that fault which is called *maniera* or *ammanierato*, that is to say, weakness of the understanding, and more of the hand, in obeying reality."⁴¹

This is Baldinucci's definition of *maniera*: "Way, fashion, mode of working. By painters, sculptors, and architects it is used to mean that particular way which any artist whatsoever regularly follows in his work; wherefore it becomes very difficult to find a work by a master, however different from other works by the same, which, in its manner, does not give some indication of being by his hand, and not by that of another. Which thing brings about necessarily, even in the most eminent masters, a certain departure from the strict imitation of reality and nature; which varies in proportion as they, with their manners, put in of their own.

"From this root word *maniera* comes *ammanierato* (mannered), which

is said of those works in which the artist, departing very far from reality, stretches everything to fit his own habitual style, both in human figures and in animals, in plants, in landscapes, and in other things; all of which in this case may, to be sure, look freely and boldly done, but will never be good paintings, sculptures, and buildings, nor will they have among themselves complete variety. And this is so universal a vice, that it includes (in a greater or smaller degree) the majority of, or almost all, the artists."⁴²

Milizia also defines *maniera*: "The manner, style, or character of each artist is the peculiarity that individualizes him, and distinguishes him from others. The young [pupil] easily makes the mistake of believing his master's manner to be glorious. Therefore he imitates him, and imitates a fault. The aim of art is beautiful nature, and beautiful nature is to be sought in the productions of the arts [generally] and not in the particular practice of the artist.

"A great artist's manner, no matter how beautiful, is always faulty, because it is never exactly beautiful nature; it is always affected by his personal character depending upon his constitution. To such a fault the slavish imitator adds his own, deriving from his particular character. And thus faults [are heaped] upon faults.

"In order to preserve oneself from this contagion, one should reflect that masters are not great for their manners, but for the beauties included in their works. In order to become better acquainted with these beauties, one should not cling tenaciously to one master and take him as one's sole guide."⁴³

Milizia was such a rigid objectivist, that any expression of the artist's own self seemed to him a fault.

Roger de Piles⁴⁴ and Diderot⁴⁵ likewise defined *manière* as a "vice"

or a "bad habit."

The adjective derived from *maniera* was *manieroso* in Malvasia,⁴⁶ *ammanierato* in Baldinucci⁴⁷ and in Milizia,⁴⁸ *maniéré* in Furetière⁴⁹ and in Diderot,⁵⁰ all of which mean mannered.

The substantive *maniériste* appears in Fréart de Chambray (1662),⁵¹ who perhaps invented it, and in Roger de Piles.⁵² Dryden's translation of de Piles⁵³ introduced it into English, and Salvini's translation of Fréart into Italian.⁵⁴ Francesco Albani in a similar sense had spoken of *pratichisti e pennelleggiantisti*.⁵⁵ Lanzi uses both *manierista* and *manierismo*,⁵⁶ a word that some linguists deemed unnecessary,⁵⁷ but that has the advantage of being less ambiguous than *maniera*.

In the criticism of architecture the word *manierista* appears in a letter by Temanza, an eighteenth-century artist and historian, who uses it more or less as a synonym of baroque: *L' Italia oggidì è ripienad'architetti, ma sono tutti, per valermi d'un termine pittorico, manieristi, vale a dire lontani affatto dalla natura e dal vero* (Italy nowadays is full of architects, but they are all, to make use of a painterly term, mannerists, that is to say, entirely removed from nature and truth).⁵⁸ And Selvatico mentions *il manierismo borrominesco*.⁵⁹

Manner and mannerism in recent usage. While European art turned neoclassic, then romantic, then realistic, these terms usually kept their unfavourable connotation. As long as the aim of art was considered to be the imitation of beautiful nature (according to the theory of Alberti, which the Academies had spread all over Europe), or even of nature without adjectives (as it was thought in the nineteenth century), as long as the resemblance to nature was considered as the criterion whereby to judge of the excellence of art, mannerism continued to be classed as a "vice." Yet in a poem by Guido Gozzano one finds a different emotional tone. The poet recalls nostalgically

the mannered exoticism of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel, *Paul et Virginie*, and asks:

*Quel Tropico rammenti, di maniera,
un poco falso, come piace a me?*

(Do you remember that mannered Tropic, a little false, as I like it?⁶⁰)

Recently, in connection with a fairer appreciation of the art of the sixteenth century, mannerism and mannerist have become the historical denominations for a certain school of artists, without any implication of demerit.

Summing up, we have found three principal meanings of the word *maniera*: (a) way or mode, (b) style, (c) mannerism. The use of *maniera* for good manner I do not consider as a separate sense, because it is merely an occasional trope, such as any writer may make with any word, whenever he thinks fit. I have mentioned it in order to avoid misinterpretations of Vasari's text.

The first sense is the oldest, as old as the Italian literary language. The second appears in writing for the first time in Cennini, but was doubtless already in use in the speech of the painters. The third evolved gradually during the controversies about mannerism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and appears in literature with Bellori.

These various meanings, introduced in various ages, have all been accepted in Italian and are used to the present day. I have quoted only the earliest instances of each one. Synonymous with *maniera*, *fare*, etc. is also the word *stile*, which was transferred to the Fine Arts from literature, and which in the last centuries has become more frequent, perhaps owing to the desire to avoid the unfavourable associations of *maniera*, perhaps owing to French influence. But *maniera* is still extensively used in connection with painting. Italian is a conservative language, based on literature and not on fashion, and a good word used by good writers is not likely to become obsolete.⁶¹

* This study was begun in the spring of 1940 under the direction of Prof. Erwin Panofsky in a seminar at the Institute of Fine Arts. I wish to thank Prof. Panofsky and Prof. Walter Friedlaender for their valuable advice.

1. *Decameron*, giorn. II, nov. 7. As to the etymology of the word *maniera*, it is probably a very ancient borrowing from the Provençals or the French, in whose territories it appears since the early twelfth century. The first instances occur in the writings of Saint Bernard, and of Abelard, who equates *maneries* with *genus*. Shortly after, the Italian Uguccione defines *species* as *rerum maneries*. The ultimate origin is probably from the Latin *manuarius*. Phonetically there is no difficulty, but the transition of meaning is not clear, since *manuarius* means: (a) used by hand, (b) a thief. No awareness of any connection of manner with the hands or with stealing survives in French, Provençal, or Italian. Besides meaning "way" and "kind," this word, in the Romance languages and in English, has other meanings not connected with art. See the dictionaries: Du Cange, the *Crusca*, Littré, Raynouard, Emil Levy, and the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
2. Cennini, C., *Il Libro dell' arte*, (ed. D.V. Thompson, Jr.) New Haven, 1932, p. 15. This precept was severely criticized by L.B. Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci, who advocated the study of nature instead.
3. Schlosser, J. von, *Lorenzo Ghibertis Denkwuerdigkeiten (I commentarii)*, Berlin, 1912, I, 35.
4. *Ibid.*, I, 39.
5. *Ibid.*, I, 43.
6. *Ibid.*, I, 35f.

7. Oettingen, W. von (Editor), *Antonio Averlino Filarete's Tractat ueber die Baukunst (Quellenschriften fuer Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik, N.F., III. Band)* Wien, 1896, Buch VIII, p. 272.
8. Frey, C., *Le vite di F. Brunelleschi scultore e architetto fiorentino scritte da G. Vasari e da anonimo autore*, Berlin, 1887, p. 61.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
12. Venturi, A., *La pittura del cinquecento, (Storia dell'arte italiana)*, parte II, Milano, 1926, p. 47ff.
13. The preface to the second part (Vasari, G., *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architetti*, ed. Milanese, Firenze, 1878-85, II, 93) should be compared with the distinction between annals and history in Cicero (*De oratore*, II, 12, 53) and in Aulus Gellius (*Noct. att.*, V, 18). These views were common in the Renaissance. Cf., for instance, the beginning of Matteo Palmieri's *Capture of Pisa*.
14. Vasari, *op. cit.*, I, 482.
15. *Ibid.*, I, 242.
16. *Ibid.*, VII, 727.
17. *Ibid.*, II, 603, and VI, 472.

18. Others who changed manner, according to Vasari, were Lorenzo Lotto, Iacopo Pontormo, Garofalo, Girolamo da Carpi, and Titian.
19. Vasari, *op. cit.*, IV, 8.
20. Of course *maniera* and *modo* are found in Vasari in many other acceptations that have nothing to do with style. Sometimes they also signify the technical processes of art, such as oil, mosaic, wood-cutting, etc.
21. Vasari, *op. cit.*, II, 106.
22. *Ibid.*, II, 288.
23. *Ibid.*, IV, 7.
24. *Ibid.*, I, 149.
25. *Ibid.*, III, 115. Milanesi remarks that Vasari in practice did exactly the opposite of what he preaches here, since he imitated the manner of Michelangelo.
26. *Ibid.*, III, 585.
27. *Ibid.*, IV, 97.
28. *Ibid.*, VI, 382, 397, and 588; VII, 431.
29. Borghini, R., *Il Riposo*, Milano, 1807, I, 184.
30. Armenini, G.B. *De' veri precetti della pittura*, Ravenna, 1587, p. 49.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
34. Bottari, G., *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*,...continuata...da S. Ticozzi, Milano, 1822-25, VI, 121-129. Marquess Giustiniani mixes together two different questions: a) The order of the course of studies the young painter should follow while learning his art; b) the classification of the painters' schools according to their manners. Moreover he surely errs in putting Rubens among the realists, and Caravaggio among the synthesizers. Bellori and the others remarked correctly that Caravaggio had discarded the principle of beautiful nature, to which most of the others clung, but erred in rating the Carracci higher than Caravaggio. They showed a very human tendency to confuse style with quality or merit, as though the adoption of a certain style (e.g. idealistic naturalism) were *ipso facto* conducive to excellence, and the adoption of others (e.g. realism, mannerism), to inferior art. This error has always been frequent because it is easier to distinguish styles than to evaluate quality.
35. Bellori, G.P. *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, Roma, 1672, p. 20. This dialectic scheme occurs already in the unpublished *Considerazioni* by Giulio Mancini, written between 1614 and 1621. See Schlosser-Magnino, *La letteratura artistica*, p. 446.
36. Malvasia, C.C., *Felsina pittrice*, Bologna, 1678, *passim*.
37. Baldinucci, F., *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, Firenze, 1767-74, IX, 164.
38. Félibien, A. *Entretiens sur les vies et les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes*, Paris, 1688, II, 58-59.

39. Bellori, *loc. cit.*
40. Baldinucci, *op. cit.*, XV, 58.
41. *Ibid.*, XXI, 122.
42. Baldinucci, F., *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno*, Firenze, 1681, p. 88. The same definition is repeated with some variants in the *Lettera di Filippo Baldinucci fiorentino, nella quale si risponde ad alcuni quesiti in materia di pittura, all'Ill.mo e Clar.mo Sig. Marchese e Senatore Vincenzio Capponi*, Roma, 1681, p. 11. The latter text is followed in this translation.
43. Milizia, F., *Dizionario delle belle arti del disegno*, Bologna, 1827, II, 197.
44. Piles, R. de, *Cours de peinture par principes*, Paris, 1708, p. 40.
45. Diderot, D., 'Essai sur la peinture', chap. I, (*Oeuvres*, Paris, 1821, VIII, 412-417); 'Salon de 1767', no. 235, De Marteau (*ibid.*, X, 102-110).
46. Malvasia, *op. cit.*, I, 212, 253, 276, 288, 358; II, 6. Malvasia employs also the phrase *maniera manierosa* (mannered style). The adjective *manieroso* had been used previously to express admiration by C. Ridolfi (*Le Maraviglie dell' arte*, Venezia, 1648, p. 251).
47. *Notizie*, ed. cit., IX, 128; XII, 67, 69; XIV, 130, 134; XV, 58; XVI, 152; XXI, 23, 122.
48. Milizia, F., *Dell'arte di vedere nelle belle arti del disegno*, Genova, 1786, p. 9.

49. Furetière, A., *Dictionnaire universel*, La Haye et Rotterdam, 1694, II, 69.
50. 'Essai sur la peinture', chap. I, (*Oeuvres*, ed. cit., VIII, 415).
'Observations sur la sculpture', (*ibid.*, X, 304).
51. Fréart de Chambray, R., *Idée de la perfection de la peinture*, Le Mans, 1662, p. 120.
52. *L' Art de Peinture de C. A. Du Fresnoy, traduit en françois, enrichi de remarques, revû, corrigé, et augmenté par Monsieur De Piles*, Paris, 1751, p. 186 (remark on line 233 of the Latin text).
53. *De arte graphica, The art of painting by C. A. Du Fresnoy with remarks, translated into English...by Mr. Dryden*, London, 1695, p. 151 and 310.
54. *Idea della perfezione della pittura di Mr. R. Freart, tradotta dal francese da A. M. Salvini*, Firenze, 1809, p. 86.
55. Malvasia, op. cit., II, 249.
56. Lanzi, L., *Storia pittorica dell'Italia*, Bassano, 1809, I, 186 and 189; II, 3, 106 and 144; III, 192, and 193; V, 393.
57. E.g., N. Tommaseo in his dictionary.
58. Bottari, G., op. cit., VIII, 315.
59. Selvatico, P., *Sull'architettura e sulla scultura in Venezia*, Venezia, 1847, p. 458.
60. Gozzano, G., *I colloqui*, Milano, 1911, p. 48.

61. On the art theories of the Renaissance see: Blunt, A., *Artistic theory in Italy 1450-1600*, Oxford, 1940; Panofsky, E., *Idea*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1924; Ragghianti, C.L., 'I Carracci e la critica d'arte nell'età barocca', *La Critica* XXXI (1933), pp. 65, 223, 382; Schlosser-Magnino, J., *La letteratura artistica*, Firenze, 1935; Venturi, L., *Il gusto dei primitivi*, Bologna, 1926; Venturi, L., *History of art criticism*, New York, 1936. On the word *maniera* see: Argan, G.C., 'Maniera e manierismo', *Enciclopedia Italiana*, XXII, Roma, 1934, p. 126; Freeman, J.G., *The maniera of Vasari*, London, 1867; *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, IX, Firenze, 1905, pp. 818-822. On the manneristic style and the academic reaction see: Friedlaender, W., 'Die Entstehung des Antiklassischen Stiles in der Italienischen Malerei um 1520', *Repertorium fuer Kunstwissenschaft*, XLVI (1925) pp. 49-86; Friedlaender, W., 'Der Antimanageristische Stil um 1590 und sein Verhaeltnis zum Uebersinnlichen', *Vortraege der Bibliothek Warburg*, VIII, Leipzig (1928-29), pp. 214-243.





Fig. 1. Attributed to Annibale Carracci, *Satire on Caravaggio*, Naples, National Museum.

CARAVAGGIO IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY*

by

Margot Cutter

89.

There is a picture in the National Museum at Naples (*fig. 1*) which has long been described as a "satire on Michelangelo da Caravaggio."¹ Traditionally attributed to Annibale Carracci, it depicts a bearded man, clad in animal skins, seated and holding in his lap a small dog which plays with a monkey at his side. A second monkey climbs on his shoulder. Just behind him, projecting into the picture from the right hand frame, appears the grinning face of another man. To him the former indicates (with Michelangelesque gesture) a dwarf and a large black dog, while holding forth a bunch of grapes to a parrot perched on the dwarf's back. The meaning² of the picture is clear. Caravaggio, a man of wild and uncouth nature,² points to the favorite subject of his art, here represented by the group of the dwarf and the dog as symbols of "deformed" and "common" nature. The parrot and the monkeys, traditional symbols³ of imitation, show that he rendered that subject by servile copying.³ The small dog in his lap suggests perhaps "blind adulation,"⁴ and as such may be a reference to Caravaggio's indiscriminating admirers, while the few pieces of fruit lying on the ground in the right foreground may be associated with his reputation as a fruit and flower painter. The jeering profile to the right is supposedly Annibale himself, thus represented as making fun of his rival's art, which he intended to describe as an ape-like imitation of misshapen nature. The authenticity of such an attribution or of such an interpretation does not concern us here. It is sufficient that tradition should have explained it so, for it thus becomes an eloquent summary of a wide-spread attitude toward Caravaggio at the opening of the seventeenth century.

But such an attitude was not universal. Criticism arose along a double front determined by the artist-amateurs on the one hand and the academic officialdom on the other. The admiration of the one was as fervent as the opposition of the other was bitter. Somewhere in between, one may picture a curious but not bewildered public. Indeed, the gamut of emotions which Caravaggio's art seems to have awakened,

can be illustrated in the history of a single picture: *the Death of the Virgin*. Painted for the Church of the Scala, it was rejected by the Church Fathers because they claimed the Virgin resembled a peasant woman too much.⁵ It passed thereafter into one of the most famous collections of the period, that of the Dukes of Mantua, through no less an intermediary than Rubens himself. Giovanni Magno, who in 1607 was acting as a kind of purchasing agent for the Duke in Rome, suggests in his correspondence something of the furor which accompanied the picture's final disposition. This ranged from sheer curiosity, which demanded that it be put on display for a week before being shipped to Mantua, to the enthusiastic approval of a Rubens, who, we are told, expressed even greater satisfaction upon seeing it for the second time. Magno, for his own part, claiming to be one of those who seek only "something pleasing to the eye," confesses to being more impressed by the testimony of "men of the profession" than by the picture itself. He is unable to understand those "occult artifices which place the picture in such high esteem."⁷ But the fact remains that Caravaggio's fame was such, and his pictures so highly prized among collectors and amateurs, that no museum or collection was considered complete without a work by his hand.⁸ In one instance, even the very reputation of Vincenzo Giustiniani as a connoisseur was held to have depended largely upon his purchase of Caravaggio's *Cupid*.⁹

Among the theorists, however, such enthusiasm was certainly suspect; it could easily be explained away. Zuccari, for example, attempted to do so, when he wrote - or is supposed to have written - that Caravaggio's popularity was no matter of surprise. The sensational aspects of the painter's life as well as of his art were sufficient to recommend him to those rich lords who were proclaiming themselves his patrons.¹⁰ The critical tradition as preserved in literature is one-sided and predominantly hostile. Approbation of Caravaggio's art is recorded only as a mere act of patronage,¹¹ or on such second-hand testimony as the academicians themselves provide in opposing such

a favorable attitude. Those who greeted it with enthusiasm rarely made an attempt to explain or justify their position. That this should have been the case is not, indeed, surprising; for to write at all was partly to identify oneself with the academic point of view. A certain prejudice against a movement which had originated as a revolt from academic tradition was postulated from the moment of picking up the pen.

The "naturalistic movement" which Caravaggio initiated did not, of course, produce any theorists of its own. Caravaggio, because of temperament and circumstance had never founded a school, even in practice. He had imitators rather than pupils. The course of events which led him to comparatively brief periods of activity in numerous cities determined from the outset that even geographically his influence should be diffused rather than concentrated. In consequence it was also short-lived, for by the opening of the third decade of the century "caravaggism" as such had died away, at least from Rome, and had transferred its centers to Naples, Genoa, and Sicily.¹² Furthermore, Caravaggio's immediate followers had been guilty of a misunderstanding of his style almost as complete as that of the critics themselves. In perpetuating the result rather than the underlying intention they tended to justify rather than disprove the critics' charges. The brunt of the attack may be said to have been directed toward them rather than toward him, but that distinction was rarely made by his contemporaries. Caravaggio's real significance was too far reaching and the implications of his style too slow of fulfillment to be immediately recognized. When it did take effect, it did so geographically and chronologically beyond the sphere of his immediate influence.¹³ Thus, if he was in a sense indecisive for the immediate directions to be followed in practice, it is not to be wondered at that he was even more indecisive for theory. His art, highly individualistic and essentially unprogrammatic, had none of the rudiments necessary for the formulation of theory. The program of "naturalism" as it came to be conceived was artificial and negative, devised by the opponents of the movement in support not

of its principles, but rather of their own.

In such an unfavorable atmosphere, then, were the most widely accepted notions on Caravaggio's art formulated in the first half of the seventeenth century. By 1672, when Giovanni Pietro Bellori included in his *Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, the most extensive account of Caravaggio's life and work yet to appear,¹⁴ the essential outlines of that estimate had already been determined. It was Bellori who systematized many of the common ideas on art into what was ultimately to become the basis of later academic theory. With the same authority he forged the current opinion concerning Caravaggio into a partly just but on the whole distorted interpretation of him. This was to wait nearly two centuries before it was altered in any significant way.¹⁵

Bellori did not hesitate to concede Caravaggio an important position among artists of the period. In this he was like most of his contemporaries who - wherever their predetermined notions of what constituted the excellence of a work of art permitted - were able to bestow a good deal of praise on him, almost in spite of themselves. Indeed, to include Caravaggio at all in the *Lives*, where the declared intention had been to treat only the most significant,¹⁶ was to pay him a certain amount of tribute. But even this concession was to have important consequences for the course of future criticism, consequences that were for the most part adverse. In spite of the essential difference in their points of view, Bellori, like his predecessor the Mannerist historian Vasari, conceived of the history of art as a progressive development toward a supposed ultimate perfection.¹⁷ He attempted to fit the styles current in Rome at the end of the sixteenth century into an historical framework compatible with such an evolutionary theory. But, in according Caravaggio a place within that framework, he committed him almost irrevocably to a position as liable to attack as it was in part appropriate.

The triad of styles dominating Rome around 1600, this triad which was ultimately elaborated as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis,¹⁸ had been briefly delineated by Van Mander on the basis of reports brought by returning travellers. These he added to his *Schilderboeck*, published in 1604.¹⁹ The period - under the regime of a new Pope sympathetic to the arts - was, he suggests, one of keen rivalry among artists each striving for official honors. Among the chief competitors he mentions "Giuseppe - much honored by the great on account of his art, and risen in prosperity and fame"; a certain Carracci who executed several "excellent works," especially the gallery of the Palazzo Farnese, so beautifully painted "that that manner was said to excel that of all other masters"; and thirdly, a Michelangelo da Caravaggio "who, in Rome, was doing wonderful things," and who, "like Arpino, had risen from the bottom to high honors." Van Mander, as a contemporary and somewhat removed from the scene of action, does no more than report the fact. He does not declare himself as to the relative merits of the three major styles.²⁰ Bellori, in retrospect, tries to establish their relationship in terms of historical function. In so doing he formulates his concept of the "second flowering of art," after the post-Renaissance decline, which was to weigh heavily and long upon future criticism. The question is stated in summary at the beginning of his account of the life of Annibale Carracci: "During this long period of unrest (i.e., the decline of art after Raphael)," he says, "art fell into two extremes: the one subject wholly to nature, the other to the mind (*fantasia*). The originators of the two methods in Rome were Michelangelo da Caravaggio and Giuseppe d'Arpino; the first limited himself to copying objects as they appear to the eye, without selection; the second disregarded nature, following the freedom of his fancy..." Annibale Carracci, however, restored declining art by effecting a "combination, rarely permitted to man, of *nature* and *art* in highest excellence."²¹

Bellori's attitude toward the synthetic art of the Carracci was,

in simplest terms, merely that of champion of the 'middle way' and as such was in no sense new.²² But this theory placed Caravaggio historically as one of two extremes only ultimately resolved into perfection. It recognized his function as a necessary reaction to Mannerism, but found the cure almost worse than the disease.²³ Bellori's establishment of the Carracci as the initiators of a *seconda fioritura* and his fatal equation of Caravaggio's style with the equally vicious practices of Arpino was not soon to be forgotten and was grave with consequences for the future. It meant that interpretation of him would be largely determined in the light of the old dilemma of 'nature' versus 'art,' a dilemma suddenly sharpened during the period of Mannerism, and one from which Bellori sought at least a theoretical escape. The recognition of Caravaggio's style as a reaction to Mannerism tended to render the sense of his apparent isolation from tradition more acute. It emphasized his revolutionary character in terms of naturalism at the expense of the anti-naturalistic and classical aspects of his style. It dictated further that the principle of 'imitation of nature' should be applied to him in its strictest and most literal sense.²⁴

To be a 'naturalist' in the seventeenth century was, like Demetrius of antique fame, to 'emulate art without art.'²⁵ The implications of such a charge in the light of seventeenth century theory are too well known to need elaboration here. To trace their endless application to Caravaggio by his numerous critics would cause needless repetition. Briefly, it meant in the first place, to challenge the authority of tradition. To acknowledge no other master than the model was to be born for the 'ruin of art'; for art in the highest sense was held to be nearly synonymous with what Raphael had 'divinely taught.'²⁶ It meant, in the second place, to challenge the old and well established formula that the excellence of a work of art lay at least in part within the subject matter itself, which automatically proscribed the inclusion of the 'vulgar and the ugly.' In part, then, the persistence of the Renaissance ideal of *decorum*,²⁷ with the special moral-

istic coloring lent to that concept by the Counter-Reformation, gave rise to the many charges against Caravaggio's figural types: that they were selected from common nature, that his madonnas were peasant women, that his religious figures were saintly neither in appearance nor in attitude, that he was a 'painter of dirty feet.'²⁸ The third implication was closely related to the special aesthetic significance of the subject. To be a 'naturalist,' or a servile copyist of nature, was to ignore the high function of the mind. For with Zuccari, for example, it was independence from the model and the ability to create within the mind alone which automatically distinguished the good artist from the bad.²⁹ Thus, to be a 'naturalist' was to limit oneself to the practice of the hand and not otherwise to exercise one's talents. It was to stop with external imitation and to be unable to animate one's figures or to give them 'expression.' It was, indeed, to be lacking in the science and learning of art.³⁰

A naturalist was also, by definition, a colorist,³¹ and it was here that Caravaggio came in for his share of praise. Van Mander already associates the cause of naturalism with that of color, in connection with Caravaggio. He distinguishes between making preliminary sketches from nature - which would have satisfied Renaissance requirements that art imitate nature - and 'painting' from it. In making this distinction he recognizes Caravaggio's innovation and commends him for it. For, he concludes, Caravaggio was not wholly mistaken in seeking to find a good 'method' by 'copying nature - in painting it ... since to paint even after having made careful preliminary sketches from nature beforehand is surely less precise than to have life before one and thus to reproduce nature in all its many colors.'³² The result of such a method was the revitalization of color by reference to nature itself, which was indeed generally conceded to be Caravaggio's great contribution. Mancini sees that for this the period was chiefly indebted to him.³³ Even Baglione speaks of the good manner which he had acquired in coloring from nature, and Bellori points out that he had

restored force to color, in returning art to imitation.''³⁴ It was the 'force' of his color which was appreciated, and on this account he was set up as an example to young students of painting.³⁵ Malvasia tells us that Alessandro Tiarini liked the work of Caravaggio 'for the purity, truth and force of his color, marvelling indeed at the stimulating effect it had upon him even though it was completely lacking in decorum, majesty, and erudition'; and that he ordered a copy of the *St. Thomas*, from which he derived great benefit, 'since by observing it he cured himself of the manner of weak coloring into which he had at first fallen.''³⁶

Caravaggio's color was, then, a constant source of admiration; but in the final reckoning this was not enough, for color itself bore the stigma of being the lesser of the component parts of painting. It lacked the 'beautiful Idea, grace, decorum, Architecture, Perspective, and other similar suitable fundamentals' which were the properties of design or drawing.³⁷ It was considered suitable only for the representation of half-figures, still-life, or genre, which obviously depended less on matters of Architecture, perspective, etc., and in these subjects Caravaggio was thought to excel;³⁸ but in neglecting the study of draughtsmanship, and contenting himself with color alone, he 'did not know how to put two figures together, nor to compose a genuine narrative, because he did not understand the goodness of so noble an art.'³⁹ Expression and composition were essentially the things of *disegno* on which history painting depended, so that whenever Caravaggio did attempt a large composition with many figures, it was found to be 'entirely without action' or the 'compositional elements and the motives were not adequate to the story.'⁴⁰ On this account he was thought to have corrupted his followers who, 'because of the convenience of models, and of doing heads from life, abandoned the making of history pictures, which are proper to painters, and gave themselves up to half figures, which previously had been little in use.'⁴¹ Here, then, his critics believed they saw in him a threat to an old and most cherished

tenet of art theory: namely, that painting could only reach the level of highest art when it took for its theme the representation of human beings in action.⁴²

In a sense Caravaggio was a victim of the old feud between color and design - in general terms the opposition of the Florentine-Roman tradition to the northern Venetian one; and the reluctance of his critics to do him justice even on the score of color was in part the "inherited" reluctance of Vasari in confronting the art of Titian. It is possibly in some such light as this that one must explain Zuccari's famous remark in *S. Luigi dei Francesi*. He said of the painting representing the *Calling of St. Matthew*: "What is all the fuss about?... I find here no more than a reminiscence (*pensiero*) of Giorgione."⁴³ Speaking with a shrug of the shoulder, Zuccari's intention was obviously to belittle the supposed revolutionary aspect of the painting. Seen at that time in retrospect, the figure of Giorgione was distant, isolated, and on the whole misunderstood.⁴⁴ Traditionally, he had been interpreted as the great innovator in a new style; and Zuccari's mention of him here was to invoke him as little more than a symbol of realistic rebellion to the early Venetian manner, in order to show that whatever seemed sensational in Caravaggio's picture was after all nothing new.⁴⁵ How broad the concept "Giorgione" really could be is evidenced by the curious remark attributed by Bernini to Annibale Carracci, that he associated with Giorgione's "Style" all works in what he called "la grande manière mais disproportionnées."⁴⁶ Stylistic distinctions were certainly not very clearly or narrowly drawn. Further proof that during the course of the century a variety of things were customarily included in the term "Venetian" (of which indeed Giorgione and Titian were considered the chief exponents), is supplied by De Piles' definitions of the various *Goûts*. Precisely in trying to distinguish between the concepts of "Venetian" and of "Lombard," De Piles points out that the Lombards (among whom he names Palma Vecchio, Moretto, Lotto, etc.) "followed," as he says, "entirely the manner of Gior-

gione and Titian." This fact led to the confused notion that Venetian and Lombard were one and the same thing, an error under which De Piles himself had been laboring at first.⁴⁷

Zuccari's association of Caravaggio's style with that of Giorgione can only be interpreted in general terms. The parallel was destined for long life among Caravaggio's critics, but, as most frequently stated, it differs somewhat from what Zuccari must have intended originally. Here, once more, it is Bellori who gives the final formulation. The latter furthers the tradition of Giorgionesque influence in making it seem an historical fact by reporting that Caravaggio was once actually in Venice - a fact completely unattested in the documents. In addition, he attempts to render it more precise by defining it in terms of technique. In so doing, he limits it specifically to the early works, deliberately excluding from the "Giorgione manner" the very picture in S. Luigi which had called forth Zuccari's original remark. Bellori finds the comparison in the clear and luminous colors of such early paintings as the *Fortune Teller*, the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, the *Card Players*, the *Lute Player*, and the *Magdalen*.⁴⁸ In these, he says, Caravaggio retained the "simple," "unmixed" colors derived from Giorgione, whose manner he describes as the "purest and simplest in representing natural forms by means of a few colors."⁴⁹ Bellori's remarks about Caravaggio's early color may be summed up as follows: he was occupied with color in the first place in order that the flesh tones might have an actual "flesh and blood" appearance. To this end he eliminated from his palette *cinabri* and *azzuri* because he felt these colors to be detrimental to the desired realistic effect. The "naturalistic method" as described in the painting of the *Magdalen* consisted in "imitating by means of a few tints until 'true' color was arrived at."⁵⁰ However superficial such a description of Caravaggio's early manner may be, and whatever superficial resemblance between it and the Giorgione style one may be willing to concede today, it is to be noted that for Bellori, and no doubt for most of his contemporaries,

from here on the comparison was clear, artificially at least. The *imitazione in poche tinte* was indeed the usual way of describing Giorgione's manner; and one has only to refer to Carlo Ridolfi's description of that manner, which had appeared some years earlier, to find in many ways a curious similarity to Bellori's remarks on Caravaggio. Ridolfi attributes the same "simplicity" of style to Giorgione, the same "naturalistic coloring" - even to the elimination of certain colors from the palette (it is *bigio*, *rancio*, and *azzurro* for Giorgione) - the same "imitation of nature by means of a few colors."⁵¹ At all events, this was the so-called "*schietta maniera*,"⁵² of Giorgione which Caravaggio was said to have approached, and which, as formulated by Bellori, remained part of the critical tradition for a good many years to come.⁵³

For Bellori, and for most of his successors, Caravaggio's departure from the Giorgione manner, the intensification of color, the introduction of strong contrasts of light and shade, was indeed a retrogressive step. The significance of his late manner, where light is used to define space as well as form, is lost upon them. In the seventeenth century his use of light, no less than his use of color, receives a purely naturalistic interpretation. It was considered in its plastic function of determining the three-dimensional aspect of things. Bellori, who apparently initiated the story of Caravaggio's placing of a single light high up in an otherwise dark studio, sees that by illuminating the principle parts of the body and leaving the rest in shadow he was able to "achieve force through light and shade."⁵⁴ The "amazingly" plastic and "astonishingly" realistic effect achieved by such contrast was what chiefly impressed.⁵⁵

For light, with its component shade, had been viewed from the time of the Renaissance only as a means for defining form. It was subordinated in the Florentine-Roman tradition to "drawing," and in the Venetian to color. A noteworthy exception, however, to the academic

principle which considered a work of art and the activity of the artist according to separate categories, occurs within the academic stronghold itself. It is contained in a lecture delivered to the members of the Accademia di S. Luca by its president, none other than Federico Zuccari.⁵⁶ He specifically attacks the older definitions of painting as formulated by such writers as Alberti and Lodovico Dolce, in which a work of art had been viewed as a combination of parts, each of which could be considered and separately appraised. He defines what he calls the "particular and essential substance" of painting as nothing more than light and shade.⁵⁷ In thus refuting the traditional division into drawing, composition, and color, in subordinating all to light, Zuccari's definition of painting has a curiously prophetic ring; but as an abstract theorist he seems to have been mainly interested in the sheer logic of his definition and unaware of any such implication. His emphasis on light and shade ought, perhaps, to be considered strictly in relation to that aspect of Mannerist painting which brought from later critics the charge that it introduced too many lights - "like too many voices in a crowded room."⁵⁸ At all events, it is clear that he made no practical application of his definition in the field of "criticism" - certainly not in connection with Caravaggio where, indeed, his attitude is sufficiently attested in other instances.

If the application of the principle of "imitation of nature" in its most literal sense defined and restricted the appreciation of Caravaggio in the seventeenth century, one further - and to the period partly related - element contributed to the interpretation of him. This one also operated in his disfavor. To the seventeenth century, Caravaggio, "a man of strange and extravagant temperament,"⁵⁹ did not behave as an artist. After the long struggle to place painting in the realm of the Fine Arts, to justify it on an intellectual plane, to find for the artist a place within aristocratic society, he was seen as a threat to that newly won position, thanks to his defiance of learning and tradition, thanks to his extravagant manner. Bellori

reinforced the association of the character of his style with his temperament and his life, and even his appearance, explaining the faults of the one by the eccentricities of the other. This attitude was common to the period as a whole.⁶⁰ The essential incompatibility of his habits with the noble profession of painting was clearly formulated by Van Mander when he remarked of him that he was "so given to quarrelling and fighting that it was difficult to get along with him. These things," he adds, "are not in harmony with our art; for Mars and Minerva have never been the best of friends."⁶¹

In the fact that Caravaggio was supposed to have followed nature too closely and hence neglected the higher and nobler functions of the mind, consists, then, the core of the charges brought against him by his critics.⁶² It has been pointed out that the opinion of his many admirers is rarely recorded in any direct way in the literature as preserved, and the reasons for this lack have already been suggested. There is perhaps a single exception appearing in a letter from Vincenzo Giustiniani to Teodoro Amideni.⁶³ Giustiniani had been Caravaggio's patron, championing his art and supporting him when the more conservative offered nothing but condemnation. He must have belonged in that circle of the more liberal few whom Giovanni Magno,⁶⁴ no doubt, would have described as versed in the "occult artifices" which made it possible to understand this new and disturbing style. Amideni himself describes him as a gentleman "of incomparable virtue and merit.... who had written many discourses on a variety of subjects,"⁶⁵ including, incidentally, a discourse on contemporary music.⁶⁶ A man of wide and varied interests, the liberality of his taste and his essentially un-academic attitude is evinced in another letter to Amideni concerning the old question of the comparative excellences of painting and sculpture. No argument, he says, can further clarify the matter. The crux of the question depends on taste, "which is determined by a natural inclination which leads one to choose, without really knowing why...or by what the philosophers would term a certain 'natural sympathy'."⁶⁷

In the letter here under consideration Giustiniani enumerates twelve different manners of painting, only the last three of which can concern us here. These are:

- 1) "The tenth is to paint, as one says, *di maniera*, that is: the painter through long practice in draughtsmanship and coloring, out of his imagination (*fantasia*), with no example before him, forms in painting what he has in his mind...."
- 2) "The eleventh manner is to paint with the natural objects before one...."
- 3) "The twelfth manner is the most perfect of all, because it is the most difficult, and consists in uniting the tenth with the eleventh already described, that is to paint *di maniera* and with the natural object as an example before one, as the most excellent painters of the first order have done."

In elaborating the old triad of styles, where neither of the first two is perfect in itself and the third owes its perfection to a combination of the virtues of the others, so far Giustiniani is merely concurring in that general attitude which, as we have seen, was to be later crystallized by Bellori. His originality lies in the choice of artists to illustrate each style. The conventional relationship of Arpino, Caravaggio, and the Carracci is suddenly disrupted, and Caravaggio is shifted to the twelfth and perfect manner where, moreover, he heads the list, followed by the Carracci, Guido Reni "and others." Giustiniani's liking for the works of Caravaggio was of course well known, and perhaps it is enough to suppose that once the conventional categories were established it was easy to shift the name of his favorite from one to the other in justification of his own taste. Yet the im-

plications of such a shift are important, for here for the first time Caravaggio is dissociated from the cause of "naturalism" pure and simple. If at first glance the association of him and the Carracci as exponents of a "similar" style seems implausible in a contemporaneous estimate, it must be remembered that there were recognized points of contact. The "return to nature" of the Carracci was taken for granted even among the theorists, in maintaining that they combined *natura* and *arte*. Furthermore, it is worth noting that at the outset at least they were on occasion subject to criticism which resembled remarkably the major charges brought against Caravaggio himself.⁶⁸ Annibale's caricatures, for instance, were certainly suspect and remained something of a blot on his record. In succeeding years this resulted in his faring less well at the hands of some critics than, for example, Lodovico.⁶⁹

But for Giustiniani we may suppose that the choice was something more than purely arbitrary, for he goes on to qualify his "most perfect style," saying that among its exponents some leaned more toward "Naturalism" and some toward "Mannerism" without ever completely abandoning either the one or the other mode of painting.⁷⁰ He thereby extends the boundaries of the perfect style to include a real diversity of talent, and in the liberality of his judgment anticipates no less an amateur than Roger de Piles.⁷¹ At all events no one else takes up Caravaggio's defense on the grounds that he too might have combined something of *arte* with *natura*. The notion that he was something more than a mere "imitator" which is implied in Giustiniani's letter remains isolated, and Giustiniani himself would probably not have wished to elaborate or explain it otherwise than on the grounds of a *simpatia naturale* on which for him, as we have seen, questions of taste depended. But he is an interesting representative of that other current in art circles of the early seventeenth century, of the men who were not bound by academic doctrine and among whom Caravaggio found his most ardent supporters.

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1. The picture, originally in the Palazzo Farnese, is listed in the inventory of items sent to the Palazzo del Giardino in Parma in 1662. From Parma it was sent to Naples in 1680 and passed ultimately into the Museo Nazionale. The traditional interpretation is not associated with it until after it had come into the latter museum. See *Museo Nazionale di Napoli, Guida illustrata*, Naples, 1911, Part II, *Pinacoteca, Catalogo di Aldo di Rinaldis*, no. 248, VII, no. 40, 318-319, illustrated.
 2. See Baldinucci, F., *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua...*, *Opere*, 4th ed., Milan, 1808-1812 (*Classici italiani*), X, 322, where Caravaggio is described as *uomo fantastico e bestiale*.
 3. For the monkey as symbol of imitation, see Panofsky, E., "'Idea'"; *ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie*, Leipzig, 1924 (*Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*, V), p. 89, note 5.
 4. See Ripa, C., *Iconologia*, Siena, 1613, p. 13.
 5. Mancini, G., *Considerazioni...*; Life of Caravaggio published by L. Venturi, *Arte*, XIII (1910), 279.
 6. Reulens, Ch. (ed.), *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires concernant ses oeuvres*, I, 1600-1608, Antwerp, 1887, p. 417.

7. *Ibid.*, I, 363.
8. Baldinucci, for example, remarks (*op.cit.*, X, 322) *che si aveva per povera quella Galleria, e quel Museo, che non avesse alcun quadro del Caravaggio.*
9. Sandrart, J. von, *L'Academia tedesca della architettura scultura et pictura, oder Teutsche Academie der Edlen Bau-, Bild-, und Mahlerey- Kuenste*, Nurenberg and Frankfurt, 1675, p. 189. For Giustiniani see below.
10. Bottari, G.G., and Ticozzi, S., *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*, 2nd ed., Milan, 1822-1825, VII, 515: *Io non mi maraviglio che il Caravaggio abbia tanti lodatori e protettori perchè la stravaganza del suo carattere e del suo dipingere sono più che bastanti a partorire questi effetti; ed i nostri signori credendosi più fini conoscitori in ragione delle ricchezze e del grado loro, giudicano bello tutto ciò che ha un'aria di novità ed è fatto per sorprendere.* Longhi, R., (*Pinacoteca*, I [1928-1929], 30, note 1, and 320, note) questions the authenticity of this letter, as well as the rest of the group published by Ticozzi over the signature of Zuccari in the appendix to *Raccolta*, VII. He claims that they are a deliberate falsification *allo scopo di esaltare le glorie dell' antica arte lombarda, e persino del quattrocento lombardo, in un gusto del tutto alieno da quel dello Zuccari; senza contare le molti flagranti incongruità cronologiche che vi si contengono* (*op.cit.*, p. 30, note 1). Among these incongruities he cites the fact that if the date of the letter here under discussion is claimed to be 1603-1604, as has been supposed (see Pevsner, N., 'Die Lehrjahre des Caravaggio', *Zeitschrift fuer bildende Kunst*, LXII [1928-1929], 278), the mention of the Campi - immediately following the quotation given above - with the implication that they were at that time still active, renders the letter suspect.

11. See, for example, note 9 above.
12. Cf. Waterhouse, E.K., *Baroque Painting in Rome*, London, 1937, p. 17.
13. An instance of a more tolerant attitude toward naturalism itself, on the part of a theorist, is to be found in Pacheco through association with Velasquez, where Caravaggio's influence had been less restricted and more profound. See Pacheco, F., *Arte de la pintura, su antigüedad y grandezas...* Madrid, 1866 (*Biblioteca de el arte en España*, II-III), II, 15-16: *perio yo me atengo al natural para todo, y si pudiese tenerlo delante siempre y en todo... Así lo hacia Micael Angelo Caravacho, ya se ve en el crucificamiento de San Pedro (con ser copias), con cuanta felicidad: así lo hace Jusepe de Rivera;...y mi yerno que sigue este camino, tambien se ve la diferencia que hace á los damás, por tener siempre delante el natural.*
14. Bellori, G.P., *Le vite dei pittori, scultori ed architetti moderni*, 3rd ed., Pisa, 1821 (*Classici italiani*), I, 207-224.
15. Cf. Schlosser-Magnino, J., *La letteratura artistica*, 2nd ed., Florence, 1935, p. 405 and p. 442.
16. Bellori, *op.cit.*, 'Introduction', pp. 3-4.
17. Schlosser-Magnino, *op.cit.*, p. 442.
18. For Mancini's position with regard to the three styles of Arpino, Caravaggio, and the Carracci, see Schlosser-Magnino, *op.cit.*, p. 446.
19. Van Mander, K., *Schilderboeck*, Alkmaar, 1604; additional notes on the lives of Italian artists, reprinted in: Vaes, M., 'Appunti di Carel van Mander su vari pittori italiani suoi contemporanei', *Roma, rivista di studi e di vita romana*, IX (1931), 203.

20. For Van Mander's attitude toward Caravaggio's "'naturalistic method,'" however, see below, p. 95 and note 32.
21. Bellori, *op.cit.*, p. 22.
22. Panofsky, *op.cit.*, pp. 58-59.
23. Bellori, *op.cit.*, p. 221: *i pittori sviati dalla naturale imitazione avevano bisogno di uno che li rimettesse nel buon sentiero; ma come facilmente per fuggire uno estremo, s'incorre nell'altro, così nell'allontanarsi dalla maniera per seguitar troppo il naturale, si scostarono affatto dall'arte, restando negli errori, e nelle tenebre, finchè Annibale Carracci venne ad illuminare le menti, ed a restituire la bellezza all'imitazione.*
24. On the evolution of this concept and its broader meaning see Lee, R.W., 'Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting', *Art Bulletin*, XXII (1940), 203-210.
25. Bellori, *op.cit.*, p. 207.
26. Cf. Carducho, V., *Dialogos de la pintura...*, 2nd ed., Madrid, 1865 (*Biblioteca de el arte in España*), pp. 203-204: *Où decir á un celoso di nuestra profesion, que la venida deste hombre al mundo, seria presagio de ruina, y fin de la pintura...*; Baglione, G., *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti...*, facsimile ed., R. Istituto di Archeologia e Storia dell' Arte, Roma, 1935, p. 138: *Anzi presso alcuni si stima, haver' esso rovinata la pittura...*; and Félibien, A., *Entretiens sur les vies et les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres, anciens et modernes*, Trevoux, 1725, III, 194: *M. Poussin...ne pouvait rien souffrir du Caravage, et disait qu'il était venu au monde pour détruire la Peinture...* See also Malvasia, C., *La Felsina Pittrice, vite de pittori Bolognesi...*, Bologna, 1678, II, 245.

27. Cf. Lee, *op.cit.*, pp. 228-235.
28. Baldinucci, *op.cit.*, 210, claims that Caravaggio painted the first St. Matthew *come se egli non un Santo, ma un qualche uomo dozzinalissimo, e plebeo avesse dovuto rappresentare*. See also Bellori, *op.cit.*, p. 221: *In Sant' Agostino si offeriscono le sozzure de' piedi del pellegrino*; and Baglione, *op.cit.*, p. 137: *Una Madonna di Loreto ritratta dal naturale con due pellegrini, uno co' piedi fangosi, e l'altra con una cuffia sdrucita, e sudicia...* Cf., however, Passeri, G.B., *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti...*, ed. Hess, J., (*Roemische Forschungen; Biblioteca Hertziana di Roma*, XI), Vienna, 1934, p. 87: [*Guido stimava*]... *nel suo concetto Michel Angelo per huomo di valore, e non che venisse lodato solo da maligni et atto a dipinger solo piedi fangosi, e cuffie sdruscite, e sudicie come è stato oltraggiato da alcuno.*
29. Cf. Panofsky, *op.cit.*, p. 51, note 214, and Schlosser-Magnino, *op.cit.*, p. 384.
30. Bellori, *op.cit.*, p. 209: *egli si fermava a quella invenzione di Natura, senza altrimenti esercitare l'ingegno*; and *ibid.*, p. 220: *Tolto dagli occhi suoi il modello, restavano vacui la mano e l'ingegno*. Cf. Scannelli, F., *Il Microcosmo della pittura...*, Cesena, 1657, II, 277.
31. Bellori, *op.cit.*, p. 222: *molti furono quelli, che imitarono la sua maniera nel colorire dal naturale, chiamati perciò Naturalisti...*
32. Van Mander, *op.cit.*, p. 203.
33. Mancini, *loc.cit.*: *Deve molto questa nostra età a Michelangelo da Caravaggio, per il colorire che ha introdotto, seguito adesso assai comunemente*. Sandrart, *op.cit.*, p. 293, reports that Rubens

imitated Caravaggio's manner of coloring upon first returning from Italy, but later abandoned it as being too difficult. Professor Panofsky has pointed out to me the source in Sandrart of this remark which is repeated later, for example, by Piles, R. de, *Abrégé de la vie des peintres*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1715, p. 389.

34. Baglione, *op.cit.*, p. 139: *Se Michelangelo Amerighi non fusse morto si presto, haveria fatto gran profitto nell'arte per la buona maniera, che presa havea nel colorire del naturale...Cf. Bellori, op.cit., p. 219.*
35. Van Mander, *loc.cit.*: *In quanto riguarda il suo stile questo e tale che piace molto ed e una maniera maravigliosamente adatta per essere seguita dai giovani pittori.*
36. Malvasia, *op.cit.*, pp. 207-208.
37. Scanelli, *op.cit.*, II, 277.
38. Mancini, *loc.cit.*: *Non si puol negare, che per una figura sola, teste e colorito, non sia arrivato ad un gran segno.*
39. Baglione, *op.cit.*, p. 138: *...molti giovani ad essemplio di lui si danno ad imitare una testa del naturale, e non studiando ne' fondamenti del disegno, e della profondità dell'arte, solamente del colorito appagansi: onde non sanno metter due figure insieme, nè tessere historia veruna, per non comprendere la bontà di sì nobil' arte. Cf. Martinez, J., Discursos practicables del nobilísimo arte de la pintura.... ed. Carderera y Solano, Madrid, 1866, p. 124: ...esta manera de obrar no es buena...para emprender obras grandiosas ni de fundar historias...*
40. Bellori, *op.cit.*, p. 214, refers to the Conversion of Paul: *la quale istoria è affatto senza azione...; and to the Martyrdom of St.*

Matthew, *ibid.*, p. 213: *Il componimento e i moti però non sono sufficienti all'istoria, ancorchè egli la rifacesse due volte...*

41. *Ibid.*, p. 220. Cf. Malvasia, *op.cit.*, p. 244;essendosi introdotto una mezza figura in scena, si fa passare per un'opera intiera, io dirò che questa viene disubligata (mentre è sola del mezzo in su) dalle coscie, libera è dalle gambe, dal piano, ove posa, libera dalla prospettiva, da i concetti, e dall'espressioni, e quello dovevo dire prima dall'invenzioni; and *ibid.*, p. 245: ...hora si sono posti a seguitare la strada del Caravaggio, che tutta è intenta ad oggetti di ferma, non di moti vivaci, che vengono dall'intelletto, e che si eseguiscano col possesso del disegno. Poiche i meloni, cucumeri, frutti diversi ogni debole cervello, che non è capace di più passare avanti ai componimenti, si ferma nelle cose insensate... One may note in this connection Caravaggio's own defense of still-life, reported in Giustiniani's letter (cf. note 63), where he is represented as saying that *tanta manifattura gli era a fare un quadro buono di fiori, come di figure.*
42. See Lee, *op.cit.*, especially the discussion on "'Invention'" and "'Expression'" (pp. 210-228).
43. This remark is reported by Baglione, *op.cit.*, p. 137.
44. For the concept of Giorgione here discussed, see Venturi, L., *Giorgione e Giorgionismo*, Milan, 1931, pp. 120-214; cf. also Voss, H., 'Caravaggio's Fruehzeit', *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, XLIV (1923), 82-84.
45. Sandrart, *op.cit.*, p. 249, sees some connection between the *Calling of Matthew* and the style of Holbein. Given to more open praise of Caravaggio than most of his contemporaries (pp. 189-190), he is, however, without special direction in thought, either theoretical

or critical. With strong national pride, one may suppose that he was merely trying to claim some of the honor attached to Caravaggio's sensational style, for his native land. For Caravaggio's influence on Rubens as interpreted by Sandrart, see note 33.

46. (Chantelou), 'Journal de voyage du Chev. Bernin en France', ed. Lalanne, L., *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1877-1884), XXIII (1881), 280: *J'oubliais à dire qu'il [Bernin] nous avait rapporté qu' Annibal Carrache, voyant quelque chose de petite manière, disait en Bolonais: Bello pare di Pietro Perugino, et quand il voyait d'autres choses en grandes manières, mais disproportionnées: Pare che siano di Giorgione.*
47. Piles, Roger De, *L'Idée de peintre parfait*, London, 1707, p. 83.
48. These paintings are described by Bellori as *i primi tratti del pennello di Michele, in quella schietta maniera di Giorgione, con oscuri temperati* (op.cit., p. 210). The S. Luigi paintings are discussed (p. 212) only after he had introduced *il colorito... tutto risentito di oscuri gagliardi* (p. 210).
49. Bellori, op.cit., p. 207 f.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 209 and 219.
51. Ridolfi, C., *Maraviglie dell'arte*, ed. Hadeln, Berlin, 1914, I, 107 (quoted in Venturi, op.cit., p. 314): *...il punto di questo affare [i.e., the Giorgione method] consiste nel ritrovar un modo facile... quindi è, che nelle mischie delle carni di questo ingegnoso Pittore non appaiono le innumerabili tinte di bigio, di rancio, d'azzurro e di si fatti colori.... [che si allontanano] dal naturale che fu da Giorgio imitato con poche tinte.*

52. Baldinucci (*op.cit.*, p. 208) extended the parallel to include subject matter and composition as well, stating with reference to the *Card Players*: *volle in questo quadro, siccome in altri che fece poi ...accomodarsi al modo d'inventare schietto del suo Giorgione.*
53. See, e.g., Lanzi. L., *Storia pittorica della Italia...*, 3rd ed., Bassano, 1809, II, 161, where he describes the use by Caravaggio of a color...*che dato quasi bando a' cinabri e agli azzurri, compose di poche, ma vere tinte alla giorgionesca.*
54. *Op.cit.*, p. 211; cf. among the French academicians, Felibien, *op.cit.* p. 194: *...des lumières fortes, qui pussent servir à donner plus facilement du relief aux corps qui en seroient eclairez.*
55. Cf. Scanelli, *op.cit.*, p. 51: *operando... con tal verità, forza, e rilievo, che bene spesso la natura, se non di fatto eguagliata e vinta, apportando però confusione al riguardante con istupendo inganno, allettava e rapiva l'humana vista.*
56. The lecture is given in Missirini, M., *Memorie per servire alla storia della Romana Accademia di S. Luca*, Roma, 1823, pp. 45-47.
57. For Dolce's threefold division of painting and its correspondence to the parts of painting as formulated by Alberti, see Lee, *op.cit.*, Appendix 2, pp. 264-265. Of these Zuccari says (*loc.cit.*): *Ludovico Dolce, nel suo Dialogo della pittura, fa dire ad un'altro la pittura non essere altro, che imitazione della natura per via de linee, e di colori, in piano di tavola, o di muro, o di tela, diffinizione simile alle sudette [i.e. of Lomazzo and Vasari], di poco concetto, con i sudetti mancamenti, senz'altra più propria distinzione, la quale abbraccia ogni concetto, ogni artificio, e ogni pensiero, e particolarmente e formata di chiari, e di scuri, sua propria, e particolare sostanza, che questi non l'hanno saputo dichiarare nella*

sostanza sua essenziale ...; and further, concerning Alberti's *circostrizione*, *composizione* and *ricevimento di lume*; ... *la circostrizione*, ch'egli dice è la forma, e questa è del disegno [Zuccari's *disegno esterno*], la *composizione* è ben parte della pittura, ma però anco è commune a molte altre pratiche, il *ricevimento del lume* ancora senz'altra dichiarazione è commune a tutti gli oggetti, ed a tutti le corpi, ed a tutte le materie. For Zuccari, on the other hand, these several parts are all resolved into light and shade, the medium through which the "concept" receives its external form: *Pittura*, *figlia*, e *madre del disegno*, *specchio dell'alma natura*, *vero ritratto di tutti i concetti*, che *imaginare e formare si possano*, e di tutti gli *accidenti*, e di tutte le *grazie*, *appare ciroscritta per forza de chiari*, e di *scuri*, in piano coperto di colore, dimostrando ogni sorte di forma, e di rilievo senza sostanza di corpo ... [Dico] ... la *Pittura* esser *figlia*, e *Madre del disegno* poichè....il disegno assolutamente preso, cioè l'intellettivo, è padre della *Pittura*, *Scultura*, e *Architettura*...; la *Pittura* anch'è madre del disegno, al di fuori operando con l'arte, e con la mano, e con stromenti, perch'ella quello pone in essere esterno, e reale, con li suoi chiari, e scuri;... formandolo essa [i.e., disegno] a forza di chiari, e scuri, come si è detto, e però essendo che chiari, e scuri sono facolta di proprio della *Pittura*...

In connection with the notion of light and shade as a "non-material substance" (see above, e.g.: *senza sostanza di corpo*), one may note Lomazzo's *lume* adunque è qualità senza corpo, quoted in Venturi, L., *La critica e l'arte di Leonardo da Vinci*, Bologna, 1919, p. 111; and also Boschini, M., 'Breve istruzione, per intender in qualche modo le maniere de gli autori Veneziani', Introduction to *Le Ricche minere della pittura Veneziana*, 2nd ed., Venice, 1674, (c. 3v): *E si come l'Anima sta invisibilmente nascosta nel corpo, così in virtù di questo artificioso chiar'oscuro, stanno celati quei spiritosi movimenti, senza regole certe, e determinate misure; operando solo acutamente l'ingegno.*

58. See, for example, Algarotti, F., *An Essay on Painting ...*, London, 1764, p. 110.
59. He is described by Gigli, C., *La pittura trionfante*, Venice, 1615 (quoted in Mariette, *Abecedario ...*, ed. Chennevières and Montaiglon, Paris, 1851-1860, s.v. Caravaggio) as:

*Di fantastico umor certo bizzarro
Pallido in viso, e di capillatura
Assai grande, arricciato,
Gli occhi vivaci sì, ma incaveaniti....*

60. *Op. Cit.*, p. 221: *Tali modi del Caravaggio acconsentivano alla sua fisionomia ed aspetto. Era egli di color fosco, ed aveva foschi gli occhi, nere le ciglia ed i capelli; e tale riuscì ancora naturalmente nel suo dipingere...trascorse poi nell'altra [maniera] oscura, tiratovi dal proprio temperamento, come nei ancora costumi era torbido, e contenzioso. Cf. Schlosser-Magnino, op.cit., p. 442.*
61. Van Mander, *op.cit.*, p. 203.
62. For a statement which summarizes most of the major charges brought against him, see Malvasia *op.cit.*, pp. 244-245, quoted in part above, note 41.
63. Bottari-Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*, 2nd ed., Milan, 1822-1825, VI, 127-129; quoted in Panofsky, *op.cit.*, p. 58 and note 245.
64. See above.

65. *La Storia delle famiglie romane di Teodoro Ameyden, con note ed aggiunte del Comm. Carlo Augusto Bertini*, Rome, 1914 (Istituto Araldico Romano), II, 455 (reprinted from *Rivista del Collegio Araldico*, 1906-1914). Concerning Giustiniani, see also Rodocanachi, E.P., *Aventures d'un gran seigneur Italien à travers l'Europe*, 1606, Paris (1899); retold from *Relazione...del viaggio che corse ... il sig. Vincenzo Giustiniani ... la quale fu scritta dal Sig. Bernardo Bizoni...*
66. Giustiniani, V., *Discorso sopra la musica dei suoi tempi*, ed. S. Bongi, Lucca, 1878.
67. Bottari-Ticozzi, *op.cit.*, VI, 145.
68. Malvasia, *op.cit.*, I, 375; quoted in Rouches, B., *La Peinture Bolonaise à la fin du XVIe siècle, 1575-1619*, Paris, 1913, p. 114.
69. Sir Joshua Reynolds, for example, cites Lodovico ahead of Annibale.
70. Bottari-Ticozzi, *op.cit.*, VI, 127-128.
71. See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 126.



THE SYMBOLIST PAINTERS OF 1890*

by

Anne Armstrong Wallis

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The Symbolist school of painting in France lasted only a few years, approximately from 1888 through 1892. But these years are crucial in the transition from naturalism to the deliberately subjective and abstract painting of the twentieth century.

The Symbolists have been called *L'Ecole de Pont-Aven*, Synthetists, and Neo-traditionists, but the title which best describes them is the one which they derived from their literary confreres, the Symbolists. In 1890, the *litterateurs* of Symbolism conferred the title of "Symbolist in the plastic arts" upon Paul Gauguin, who privately rejected it. But Gauguin's followers of 1888 to 1890, those who had studied with him or had been inspired by him, welcomed the name which had already become distinguished through *avant-garde* literary publications.

Before the Symbolists, naturalism was the pervading style in French painting. In the general sense of using the objects of nature as subjects, naturalism characterized both of the dominant schools of the later nineteenth century, not only the so-called Naturalists but also the Impressionists. Only a few isolated artists, notably Odilon Redon, used natural objects in any but a specifically imitative sense. But by 1907, an amazing transformation had begun in the work of the outstanding French painters. They distorted natural objects to make them more vividly suggestive, simplified, rearranged, and abstracted them into unrecognizable elements of a composition. Though the painting of the Symbolists is practically unknown today, they were the first to revolt against the intention of naturalistic painting, and to formulate a new and opposite approach. In their work, we find so strong an intimation of what was to come that a description of the Symbolists seems necessary to bridge the gap between the predominant styles of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

The group of about twenty painters who were called Symbolists, and of whom Emile Bernard, Maurice Denis, and Paul Sérusier were the most

important, drew its members largely from the *revoltés* of two Parisian ateliers where Naturalism ruled the day. This Naturalism was of the most grossly uninspired sort: one of the group complained that his master at the Académie Julian not only dictated recipes for painting but provided photographs of Jerusalem for his students to copy as 'natural' backgrounds for biblical subjects. Dissatisfied, the *revoltés* grappled with more fundamental concepts of art to which their absurdly narrow teaching was oblivious. They sought to discover in what art consists, since the copy of nature, in their opinion, was not enough, and to formulate some method by which to proceed.

It should be emphasized that the Symbolists' initial revolt was not against the current Impressionism which, at that time, was still considered too radical to be established in the academies. In fact, several of the group turned toward Impressionism in the first stages of their experiments, just as their *maître d'école*, Paul Gauguin, had done.

But they soon adapted Impressionist technique to a much greater definition and simplification of form. Any of the post-Impressionists, Gauguin, van Gogh, Cézanne, or Seurat, or even Renoir might have encouraged the Symbolists toward a method of formal structure.¹ Yet Gauguin became their leader, because it was not a technical method alone that they sought. The purpose of most of the Symbolists was the expression of ideas on a plane more personal and more meaningful than the genre scenes and the landscapes of the Impressionists. The Symbolists belonged to a growing minority who sought to withdraw from actuality by taking refuge in mysticism, or by isolating themselves in monasteries or in far off countries where, they thought, a simple, primitive society remained uncorrupted by modern Europe. In their revolt against Naturalism, the painters' distaste for its subject matter was involved as well as their desire for a technical method based upon formulas more essential to art than the copy of nature. In Gauguin, they found a painter who sympathized with them on both scores.

Gauguin's first important post-Impressionist painting was *La Lutte de Jacob avec l'ange* or *Vision après le sermon* (fig. 1), painted in 1888.² Although here the painter has followed Impressionism in the use of a random section of a scene with figures half cut off by the frame of the picture, he has concentrated upon the central, important part of a dramatic and also imaginative incident instead of merely glancing at the passing scene. The subject thus emphasized is symbolic of primitive peasant faith. In its treatment, the tipped up plane which the Impressionists favored is retained, but there is no suggestion of space, and the atmospheric perspective of the earlier style has disappeared. Subservience to natural appearance is specifically avoided in the painter's deliberate and obvious distortion of the human face, which is simplified and patterned into a flat mask. The fantastic headdresses of the Breton women gave full play to his new love for decorative shapes and lent themselves well to flat, heavily outlined pattern.

Further technical innovations important for his Symbolist followers appear in Gauguin's *Christ Jaune* (fig. 3) of the next summer (1889). Here he definitely renounced analysis of tone in nature after the Impressionist manner, and reached a completely 'synthetic' use of tone values and colors. The word 'synthesis' was used by Gauguin to denote an abstract idea combined with naturalistic appearance. When he painted 'a tree which seemed green the brightest green on his palette'³ he synthesized the natural appearance of the tree with the aspect he wished to impose upon it. For him the purpose was largely decorative; for his followers the metaphysical connotation of the 'synthetic' method was its greatest importance; and for the future of painting 'synthesis' meant a long step in the direction toward abstraction.

Emile Bernard was the first of the *revoltés* to become associated with Gauguin. He had previously turned toward Impressionism when in 1886, at the age of seventeen, he left the Atelier Cormon. He came to know of the Impressionists through Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and

Louis Anquetin, fellow students at the atelier. A painting of 1887 entitled *Ma Grand'mère* (fig. 2) shows Bernard's use of the *tachiste* brush technique characteristic of Impressionism, as well as the poster-like boldness and freedom of line reminiscent of his friend Lautrec. The same painting illustrates the first fruits of Bernard's search for a new method. With Anquetin, he had studied Japanese prints, which led him toward emphasis on decorative pattern by the use of heavy, Prussian blue outlines. This method, called *Cloisonnisme*, lent to a basically Impressionist style a definition and simplification of forms which seemed desirable to Bernard and later to the rest of the Symbolists.⁴

In the same year that he left the academy (1886) Bernard had a brief meeting with Gauguin in Brittany,⁵ and became acquainted with Vincent van Gogh with whom (along with Anquetin, Toulouse-Lautrec, and others) he held an informal exhibition the next year.⁶

The year 1888, however, marked the real beginning of the school of painting which was later to be called Symbolism. In that year the first effectual contact was made between Gauguin and Bernard. The summer found the latter once more in Brittany, probably because van Gogh had urged him to present himself again to Gauguin, whose work the Dutch painter had come to admire.⁷ This time the young man was well received. He and Gauguin painted together during the summer, frequently using the Breton landscape with costumed peasants as subjects. This subject matter, typical of the work done in Brittany by Gauguin and his followers, was closely related to that of the Impressionists. However, there is an important new element in the painters' symbolization of simple life. The peasant is always shown as a symbol, not as an individual: he is always typically costumed, his face is never important, and he is always engaged in an activity typical of and united with his environment. Also there is an attempt on the part of the artist to identify himself with peasant life, as witnessed notably by Gauguin's painting *Bonjour M. Gauguin*. There was not an attitude of sympathy for the laborer—a

spirit shown in the work of Millet and other earlier painters—but an interest in the peasant's life and surroundings as symbols of a desirable primitiveness, an antithesis to the refinements and decadence of the culture against which these artists wished to revolt. Bernard's *Bretonnes dans la prairie* (Vollard Collection) and Gauguin's famous *La lutte de Jacob avec l'ange* (fig. 1) are products of the summer of 1888.

Although Gauguin was forty years old in 1888 and Bernard was only twenty, their relationship seems to have been that of companions rather than master and pupil. The rest who came, however, admittedly looked to Gauguin for leadership.

During the same summer (1888) Paul Sérusier, a young painter from the Académie Julian, came to the inn at Pont-Aven. There he found Gauguin, Bernard, Charles Laval, Moret, and E. de Chamaillard a group apart from the orthodox painters who filled the inn during the summer months. Gauguin and his friends ate in a small dining room and were openly scorned by the self-satisfied academicians, who called them "Impressionists"⁸ as though that explained and dismissed them. Sérusier naturally took his place among the academic group. It was not until the end of the summer that he spoke to Gauguin, who, to their mutual surprise, immediately won his interest. In the fall Sérusier returned to the Académie Julian carrying the work as well as the teachings of Paul Gauguin. One of the young students relates that "he showed them with great secrecy a cigar-box cover on which could be distinguished an unformed landscape, synthetically formulated in violent vermilion, Veronese green, and other pure colors, just as they come from the tube, with practically no admixture of white."⁹ Sérusier then repeated Gauguin's words: *Comment voyez-vous cet arbre, il est bien vert? Mettez donc du vert, le plus beau vert de votre palette;—et cette ombre, plutôt bleue? Ne craignez pas de la peindre aussi bleue que possible.*¹⁰

Until then the young artists of the Académie Julian had "ignored

almost completely the great Impressionist movement which had just revolutionized painting. They admired Bastien Lepage; they spoke of Puvis with respectful indifference ... saying he didn't know how to draw.¹¹ But now, under Sérusier's influence, anything which seemed new attracted them. Impressionism, Symbolism, occultism, intuitionism, even numerology, came in turn to their attention. With Sérusier, Maurice Denis, Henri-Gabriel Ibels, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Ranson, Edouard Vuillard, K-Xavier Roussel, and René Piot broke away from the academy and formed a society called the *Nabis*,¹² which met at cafés to work out theories of art. During the next three years they were joined by the painters Jozsef Rippl-Ronai, Razetti, Jan Verkade, and Félix Vallotton and the sculptors George Lacombe and Aristide Maillol. Sérusier and Denis were the most ardent theorists among them. Denis writes:

"Thanks to Paul Sérusier the milieu was much more cultivated than that of most of the academies; we spoke habitually of Péladan,¹³ Wagner, the concerts of Lamoureux, and of 'Decadent' literature, with which after all we were scarcely acquainted. A student of Ledrain introduced us to Semitic literature, and Sérusier expounded the doctrines of Plotinus and of the Alexandrian school to the young Maurice Denis who was preparing for the examination in philosophy for a *Baccalauréat de Lettres*.'" ¹⁴

Sérusier fitted well into the role of theorist and leader in a group of young men who, like Emile Bernard, were ready to revolt against the photographic naturalism taught by the academies. Before they formulated their own system, however, the *Nabis*' discussions favored general anarchism, denial of all ready-made doctrines, and "sympathy with everything which appeared new and subversive."¹⁵

While the *Nabis* were trying their wings, Gauguin held his first one-man show.¹⁶ Then, several months later, when the Exposition Universelle of 1889 opened in Paris, the premises of M. Volpini, a café proprietor, were taken over for an exhibition described as "peintures du groupe Impressioniste et Synthétiste."¹⁷ For the first time, the work of his

Pont-Aven followers appeared grouped around that of Gauguin. Paintings by Emile Bernard, Charles Laval, Emile Schuffenecker, Louis Anquetin, Louis Roy, Léon Foché, and Georges Daniel were displayed; and an album of lithographs by Bernard and Gauguin was shown upon request.¹⁸

At this point, the contact between the *Nabis* and the Pont-Aven group, called Synthetists,¹⁹ depended solely upon Sérusier. It was not until 1890 that these two groups inspired by Gauguin came together officially. Sérusier, meanwhile, sought out Gauguin again in the summers of 1889 and 1890.²⁰

In the summer of 1890, Gauguin, Sérusier, and others of the group were joined by a new-comer, Charles Filiger. Filiger's love for Italian primitives, particularly for Duccio and Cimabue, seems to explain why he was attracted to Gauguin, whose work had attained a high degree of decorative simplicity, emphasizing flat areas of brilliant color. Furthermore, it had taken on a static, symbolic character quite different from the Impressionists' passing scenes of everyday life and the academicians' anecdotal illustrations. Filiger sketched with Gauguin in the rough, simplified, heavily outlined style characteristic of the group (like Bernard's sketch of 1889, *fig. 6*) but he also painted religious subjects in the manner of the Trecento.

Bernard, too, kept in close touch with Gauguin. While the latter was at the town of Pouldu in the summer of 1890, Bernard returned to Pont-Aven, and the two painters exchanged many letters.²¹ He sent Gauguin prints and humorous sketches on the subject of the emigration to Tahiti which they had planned with Meyer de Haan, a Dutch painter, who shared his purse with Gauguin.²²

In the months between his return to Paris from Pouldu in November, 1890, and the following April when he departed for Tahiti, Gauguin fell in with an ardent group of *avant-garde littérateurs*, the Symbolists.²³

He dined at a restaurant frequented by Jean Moréas, a poet and theorist of the Symbolist literary group. Then, through the critics Albert Aurier and Julien Leclercq, Gauguin met the other Symbolist writers and was invited to join their meetings. Soon he found himself the object of great admiration and much discussion. The distinguished company of Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, Charles Morice, Adolphe Retté, Jean Moréas, Edouard Dubus, and others, hailed him as their counterpart in the plastic arts. Certain of the painters from Gauguin's entourage, including Paul Sérusier, also had entree to this literary circle. Bernard and Maurice Denis were, at least, personally acquainted with members of the Symbolist writers' group.²⁴

For a year or two following Gauguin's departure for Tahiti, the younger painters, both *Nabis* and Pont-Aven followers, made the most of Symbolism. A few of them had already exhibited their work at the Beaux-Arts or on the boulevards; but when opportunity came for exhibiting under the aegis of Symbolism, it was welcomed by nearly all of Gauguin's younger admirers. The *Impressioniste Symboliste* shows at the gallery of Le Barc de Boutteville, starting in 1890, included Symbolist paintings by Bernard, Anquetin, Bonnard, Denis, Filiger, Ibels, Ranson, Roussel, Sérusier, Verkade and Vuillard, and occasionally something of Gauguin's. Here, according to Bernard, the young painters having a common ideal [in the work of Gauguin] met.²⁵ The Société des Artistes Indépendants began in 1892 to show Symbolist works and the same painters exhibited. It was during 1892 that the Symbolist painters began to diverge from Symbolism and from each other to such an extent that there was no longer the recognizable kinship in style and intention which allows them to be classified as a school. For these followers of Gauguin, Symbolism was largely an experimental interlude during which they adopted a "primitive" style of painting which lent itself to individual expression and experimentation.

In the short space of five years, a group of young painters,

working alike in a very revolutionary style, had organized as *Nabis* and Synthetists, then joined with the more advantageous title of Symbolists, and finally dispersed.

A characterization of Symbolism in painting was given by Albert Aurier in an article written in February 1891, 'Le Symbolisme en peinture, Paul Gauguin'. He wrote:

'Since it is becoming evident that we witness in literature today the death agony of Naturalism, since we see an idealistic, even mystic reaction preparing itself, we must wonder whether the plastic arts do not manifest some tendency toward a parallel evolution. *La lutte de Jacob avec l'ange* ... testifies sufficiently, I believe, that this tendency exists, and ... the painters engaged in this new style have every interest in ridding themselves of the absurd label of 'Impressionist', which implies a program directly contradictory to theirs. ... Let us invent a new kind of '-ist' ... for the newcomers, at the head of whom comes Gauguin: Synthetists, Idea-ists, Symbolists, as you like.... Paul Gauguin appears to me as the initiator of a new art, not in history, but at least in our times.... It is evident ... that there exist in the history of art two great contradictory tendencies one of which depends upon the blindness and the other upon the clairvoyance of this 'inner eye of man' of which Swedenborg speaks,--the realistic and idea-istic tendencies.'²⁶

Aurier goes on to state his view that the ultimate purpose in painting, as in all the arts, is to express ideas by translating them into a special language. This language is made up of objects which appear to the artist only as signs. The sign, indispensable as it is, is nothing in itself; the idea alone is significant. The artist has a feeling for symbolic correspondences, or equivalents, for the ideas which he wishes to express. Idea-ist art is, therefore, Symbolism, in that it expresses the idea by equivalent forms.

The Symbolists of both painting and literature felt that the expression of ideas was the purpose of art. To the Symbolist painter, an academic Venus seemed ready-made and an Impressionist's landscape impersonal; in Gauguin's words, there was no thought in it. Their subjects had to have importance, not that of *grande manière* subjects, but the importance of universal emotions felt in some personal form.

Analogies between Symbolist painters and poets apply also to their presentation of such ideas. Just as the poets revolted against the archeological exactitude of the Parnassians, so the painters revolted against the same quality of objectivity in naturalistic painting. For the Symbolists the object painted was never only an object; it represented an idea. The very nature of their intention demanded the use of objects and incidents for vivid suggestion rather than the description of those objects and incidents.

To the young painters of 1890, therefore, the word 'symbolism' connoted representation in personal analogies rather than analogies of general consent. Gauguin best expressed this distinction when he declared that to represent a virgin, he would never paint a woman in a white dress holding a lily. Trite, stereotyped symbols offended him, but, strangely enough, he could not understand his confrères' subtle construction of the word 'symbolist'; and therefore he denied emphatically that he was a Symbolist.

Gauguin's *Christ Jaune* (fig. 3), his *La lutte de Jacob avec l'ange* (fig. 1), his *Jeanne d'Arc* (of the year 1889, fig. 4), and many more of his paintings are Symbolist works in Aurier's sense. But Gauguin failed to understand this.²⁷ In fact, during the short period in 1890-91 while he was toasted by the literary group as their counterpart in the plastic arts, he tried to make what he thought would be a Symbolist painting. Rotonchamp describes this incident as follows:

"At the beginning of the year 1891, Gauguin, who had been drawn out

of his artistic serenity by prolonged contact with the golden-tongued theorists, undertook a large composition which he thought symbolical, and which was provisionally called *La Perte de Pucelage* It showed a nude young girl.... Behind her was a red fox who put one of his paws on her left breast. Her eyes were wide open and her feet folded over one another in a nervous gesture. It was a virgin seized at the heart by the demon of lechery.... Behind this group stretched a Breton landscape covered with haystacks. A country wedding procession ... approached by a little road which led from the background.... It supplemented the allegory of the forward plane, and pictured its normal conclusion.... This picture was for him the occasion of considerable effort, which was in vain. The canvas remained sticky and dull, was retouched all the time, and ended by being thrown away in a garret. It has since disappeared.²⁸

In attempting to illustrate a specific anecdote with an objective symbol for each detail of the story, Gauguin lost the spirit of his own school of symbolism. Furthermore, he picked deliberately a symbolic anecdote. For him it was unnatural to paint a composition so predetermined by its pictorial symbols.

Gauguin's portrait of Jean Moréas (*fig. 7*), author of the Symbolist manifesto, was also a deliberately symbolic (but not unsuccessful) work. He surrounded the head of the poet with such literary symbols as a peacock and a cherub with a sprig of laurel.²⁹ Similiar to this is Gauguin's portrait of Stéphane Mallarmé (*fig. 8*), leader of the Symbolist writers and translator of that source of Symbolist inspiration, Edgar Allen Poe, whose raven we see in the background.

Analogy between Symbolist paintings and Symbolist writings may be observed in the direct comparison of *La lutte de Jacob avec l'ange* (*fig. 1*) with Jules Laforgue's *Moralités*. Laforgue's stories convey vividly themes of universal importance yet their form consists of

disarmingly light incident. In a similar way, the painting while outwardly over-simple and almost humorous conveys the unquestioning religious faith of simple people.

The genuine Symbolist viewpoint is also clearly shown in posters and book covers, two new art forms which had begun their rise to importance about 1885. No particular incident from the story appeared on the book cover but something which suggested the general character or theme of the book. The subjects were simplified and generalized because the essence of a thing seemed more suggestive of it than an exact description of it. This viewpoint is shown in Symbolist writing by Maeterlinck, for example, who never announces his theme in so many words, never actually describes, but only suggests.

Symbolism in poetry involved an attitude toward conventional poetic forms as anarchistic as the Symbolist painters' attitude toward academic recipes. Technical virtuosity, the expert use of the caesura and of alternating masculine and feminine rhymes, seemed to them not only a restriction upon expressiveness, but also a superficial cloak of dignity. They gauged the value of an effort by its sincerity and depth of feeling; but their fear of slipping into ready-made formulas and impressive phrases led them to a deliberate simplicity which at times seems affectedly untutored. In painting this is paralleled by simplified and generalized lines, forms, and colors and by frequent examples of deliberate *gaucherie* in technique.

In considering the paintings of the Symbolists, we find a certain development within the period of 1888-1893. Symbolism, for these painters, began when they found a new approach through Gauguin. He taught them that art is above all a means of expression, and he gave them the technical means for converting the painting of natural objects to this use. Until 1890, however, their main concern seems to have

been with technical means, and, after 1890, with the ideas expressed. Because these painters were not called Symbolists until 1890, and because they partially adopted the title of Synthetists before then, the two terms have since been used upon occasion in chronological order, (though they were also used interchangeably after 1890). Thus Denis, in speaking of their development, says that the ideas of Symbolism were implicit in Synthetism, that Synthetism implied the belief in a correspondence between external forms and subjective states.³⁰ Through contact with the poets in 1890-91 there came a new theoretical emphasis upon the ideas appropriate to Symbolist painting. Therefore, the term Synthetism will be used here in describing the development of technical method before 1890 in Symbolist paintings wherein the ideas are of minor concern.

Synthesis of color seems to have been the first phase of the new style. In a sense, it grew out of the Impressionists' use of pure color. Although the primary aim of the Impressionists was to reproduce nature exactly as it appeared to the eye, the mechanics of their method suggested a free, non-naturalistic use of color. The divisionist method required tiny units of pure colors to produce a naturalistic effect of light from a certain distance; but it suggests at close range that the painter was preoccupied with the play of small spots of color for their own sake.

Gauguin, who in his early work used color impressionistically, began about 1885-87 to use color as a structural expedient in composition. Still using the Impressionist palette, he rearranged and simplified the colors in nature to form a decorative pattern. Then he rearranged the objects in nature and ceased to copy the natural shapes exactly as he observed them. His arrangements and his objects within the arrangements became arbitrary; they were like nature insofar as he wished their identity to be clear, but unlike nature, insofar as he wanted a certain pattern of colors, tones, and shapes. This was Synthetism.

Synthetism has been called classical in its approach in contrast to

both of its contemporary trends in French painting.³¹ Impressionism and Naturalism alike sought to give a representation of nature which would be true in the visual sense—which would appear in one way or another as much like the object portrayed as possible. In this endeavor they tended to lose interest in the structure of the painting. Structure, in the sense of careful compositional organization, characterized the works of Poussin, the classicist of French painting. For in Poussin's work as in Raphael's, the painting is not just a copy of nature, but an arrangement of nature, an arrangement designed in accordance with abstract principles of form and composition. It is an understanding of those abstract principles of art which the Synthetists sought to rediscover for their own generation.

The trend of the development of Symbolist painting may be followed in Emile Bernard's transformation of style. His work, next to Gauguin's the most interesting and the most outstanding in the Symbolist group, represents the movement in all its evolutions. His style changed rapidly from a sort of experimental Impressionism to the cloisonné stage, then to more boldly synthetic forms. Then came an emphasis upon the most subjective Symbolism, which, typically, disappeared about 1892. *Ma Grand'mère* (fig. 2) shows the cloisonné stage, a portrait drawn from nature, Impressionistic but inventive and boldly simplified. Bernard's *Baigneuses* of 1889 (fig. 9), while atypical in subject, shows the Synthetist technique in its most radical form. The simplified, cloisonné technique is apparent, but here a new element enters in. Synthesis has revolutionized the human form to the point of blatant distortion.³² A drawing by Bernard (about 1890, fig. 11) shows, perhaps more effectively, the distortion of natural forms, and here clearly is distortion for the purpose of greater expressiveness. This is what the Symbolists called "subjective deformation", thus distinguishing between deformation for the purpose of emphasizing the artist's emotional or personal interpretation, and deformation for the purpose of conforming with a scheme of composition. The latter they called "objective deformation".

Bernard's *Vision* of 1891 (*fig. 10*) typifies that stage of Symbolist painting when the influence of Symbolist literature was at its height, when the painters consciously intended to be visionaries and to express states of mind in their paintings. The *Vision* is a self-portrait of Bernard with a tapestry-like background of voluptuous nudes. In their midst appears the sober, moon-like face of Christ crowned with thorns. This Christ is no conventional symbol; it is Bernard's personal symbol for purity and asceticism. The nudes, too, are symbols: according to the painter, they represent voluptuous pleasure and therefore ought to be diabolic.³³ Bernard's vivid suggestion of his religious mysticism in the *Vision* makes a startling contrast with a portrait painted only three years earlier, that of Mme. Schuffenecker, or with any of his later works which are surprising academic and derivative.³⁴

Sérusier's painting shows that he, more than any other of the Symbolists, carried on the search for a technical method. At first, his paintings were mere studies of his master's style. They were, like Gauguin's work, revolutionary in their tapestry-like flatness and extremely simplified forms. *Le Bois d'Amour, à Pont-Aven* (*fig. 13*) although painted as late as 1894, still comes close to such sketches of Gauguin's as the *Calvaire Breton* (*fig. 12*). But if the two are contrasted, it is apparent that the Breton countryside held no meaning for Sérusier; his subjects always seem conspicuously lacking in personal feeling. Yet their inexpressiveness seems inevitable when one considers that in drawing every line, Sérusier was conscious of whether that line was drawn intuitively or according to numerical formulas. Both methods seemed valid to him, but he relied more and more upon formulas until his work became more nearly a pastiche of Seurat than of Gauguin. The above painting (*fig. 13*) shows this later tendency as well as Sérusier's dependence upon Gauguin's work.

Among the Symbolists, Sérusier was exceptional in seeking a method for its own sake; that is, in seeking to create great art through the

study of its form alone. Few of the Symbolists concerned themselves with painting by "scientific" theories. Vuillard and Roussel derived from Symbolism little more than the license to paint decoratively, to invent arrangements and patterns instead of copying faithfully from nature. Bonnard, too, in such paintings as the cloisonné-like *Femme assise au lapin* (fig. 15) was revolutionary only in technique, for, except in illustration, he favored the genre subjects of the Impressionists.

Although the book cover designs and posters of the Symbolists had more ideas to convey, in style they were similar to these decorative paintings. The flat colors and heavy outlines of Bernard's and Anquetin's "Cloisonnisme" and the bold style of their friend Toulouse-Lautrec determined the poster style to a great extent. In fact, Anquetin and Toulouse-Lautrec themselves were among the outstanding poster painters of the period. Henri-Gabriel Ibels, a Symbolist and one of the *Nabis*, designed posters and book covers almost exclusively.³³ Bonnard also contributed to the advertising art of the 1890's with posters for magazines, art exhibitions, and the theatre. Although Symbolist painting on the whole may be described as static, the work of Ibels and Bonnard tended to be less so than that of the rest of the group. The predominantly rhythmic and flowing organization of the *Femme assise au lapin* (fig. 15) was probably extreme for Bonnard in 1891, but this style came into painting and advertising art early in the 1890's and, as "Art Nouveau," was well known by 1895.

Book illustration, as well as book covers and posters, was a field invaded by Symbolist painters about 1890. In illustration, the subject of the painting emerged as a serious consideration, and there the Symbolists' ability to suggest an idea is especially well brought out. The painter felt that the basic intention of the author, rather than the specific elements of the story, should be reflected in the illustrations. Painters such as Bonnard and Denis read and understood the works they illustrated; it was no mere matter of illustrating descriptive

paragraphs here and there throughout the text. In 1890 Denis completed a series of illustrations for Verlaine's *Sagesse* and, in the next year, a series for *l'Intruse* by Maeterlinck (fig. 14).³⁶ His illustrations bear out his theories as expressed in his 'Définition du Néo-traditionnisme':

"... to find a decoration without servitude to text, without exact correspondence of the subject to the writing; but rather an embellishment of arabesques on the pages, an accompaniment of expressive lines."³⁷

Similarly, an illustration (fig. 16) by Armand Séguin for "*Ecoutez la chanson bien douce ...*" from *Sagesse* takes no pictorial images from the poem:

*Ecoutez la chanson bien douce
Qui ne pleure que pour vous plaire.
Elle est discrète, elle est légère:
Un frisson d'eau la mousse!*

*La voix vous fut connue (et chère?)
Mais à présent elle est voilée
Comme une veuve désolée.
Pourtant comme elle encore fière,*

38

What little imagery Verlaine provides—*La voix ... est voilée comme une veuve désolée*, etc.—cannot be drawn in black and white as an illustration for the poem. Séguin has caught the spirit of the poem without venturing to rob Verlaine's personification of its own suggestiveness. That he would choose to illustrate such a poem is indicative of the Symbolist painter's point of view.

In a sense, Séguin's illustration accompanies Verlaine's poem in the same way that the words "*Soyez amoureuses, vous serez heureuses*" (fig. 17) accompany Gauguin's wood-carved bas-relief. In the first instance, the poem expresses the thoughts, the engraving is the accompaniment; in the other case, the bas-relief is the poem accompanied by a

title which merely suggests (but neither illustrates nor explains) the thoughts involved in the work itself. In this same way, the title of Gauguin's great painting, the *D'où venons nous....* of 1898, may also be explained. No parts of the canvas are intended to ask or answer specifically the questions: 'Whence do we come? What are we? Where are we going?'

In the preface to the catalogue for an exhibition (1895) of works by Séguin, Gauguin offered somewhat grudgingly but genuinely, the rare compliment that Séguin's works showed what the Synthetist and Symbolist painters had wished to realize.³⁹ He also wrote, in praise of Séguin: 'Séguin ... is a *'cérébral'* — not a *littéraire* — in that he expresses what he thinks, not what he sees.'⁴⁰ Of a specific painting, he remarked, 'There is no coquetry, nothing literary, it is sufficient as a decoration.'⁴¹

When Gauguin first taught Sérusier that paint cannot really reproduce the effect of sunlight, and, therefore, one should use intense, pure colors as 'equivalents' to bright sunlight, he gave impetus to many elaborate esthetic theories. In the writings of Denis, Bernard, and Sérusier, the direct influence of Gauguin's simple statements may be found. For example, from his argument for the need of equivalents came generalizations which disparaged any sort of copying from nature. Furthermore, Gauguin's remarks, and his paintings as well, seemed to bear out the theory that not only nature but ideas must be expressed in equivalents.

That form in itself can express ideas and emotions was the basic theory of the Symbolists, painters and poets alike. The fundamental point that the expression of ideas and emotions is the purpose of art is implicit in all the theoretical writings of Gauguin, Denis, and Bernard, and to some extent in Sérusier.

Maurice Denis, in the first attempt to define the method of the Symbolists, wrote his 'Définition de Néo-traditionnisme' in 1890.⁴² In it he emphasized the decadence of Naturalism, the esthetic value of abstract decoration, and the expressiveness of color and form as opposed to 'literary' expressiveness. He says: 'A picture, before being a war horse, a nude woman; or some event or other, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order.'⁴³ By this, however, he did not mean that a recognizable subject should be dispensed with. Naturalism to him meant photographic naturalism or the tendency to approach photographic naturalism. He admits that the idea of nature varies from one salon to the next, with the fickleness of fashion in dresses or hats; and besides, that each painter has his own personal perception of nature. Denis continues:

'But I understand that ... universal consent, in this as in other unsolvable questions, has some value; that photography makes inquiries upon the reality of form, and that a mold taken from nature is as much like nature as possible.... I shall call 'nature' the optical illusion of the crowd, as those grapes of the old painter which were pecked by the birds, and the panoramas of M. Détaillé.... Pure naturalism having been accomplished, the end is reached, there is nothing beyond, one can descend no further, and certainly we rise.'⁴⁴

As a student, Denis had deeply resented his master's criticism of a 'very white woman' he had painted 'on which the light played like the tremblings of a rainbow.' The master remarked, 'It is not nature, you will never sleep with that woman.'⁴⁵ Denis' resentment rested not only upon his master's disregard for decorative value but upon his obliviousness to spiritual value as well. Denis continues:

'Our superior impression of the moral order before the *Calvaire* [of Gauguin] or the bas-relief *Soyez Amoureuses* could not spring from the motif or motifs of represented nature, but from the representation itself, from the form and coloring.

"The emotion, bitter or consoling, springs from the canvas itself, a flat surface covered with colors...

"A Byzantine Christ is a symbol; the Jesus of modern painters, were his head dressed in the most exact turban, is only literary. In one it is the form which is expressive, in the other it is the imitation of nature."⁴⁶

Denis believed that the purpose of art is expression of personal feeling, and that personal feeling must be suggested by form and color; hence both his purpose and his means are at odds with those of "literary" painting, in which the meaning or the story is read by the natural objects represented. As to method, Denis says, "Be sincere: to paint well, it is enough to be sincere. Be naive. Make what is seen stupidly."⁴⁷ We will find this sentiment, which may be called "primitivist," even more strongly expressed by the other theorists.

The second Symbolist to write on esthetic theory was Sérusier, whose pamphlet *A. B. C. de la Peinture* was first published in 1891.⁴⁸ In his writing, he scarcely mentions personal expression as the purpose of art. He says only, "Make sure your choice of motif reveals the tendencies of your mind." But that he agreed with the purpose of Symbolism is testified by Denis who, referring to Gauguin's paintings as splendid dreams "compared with the miserable realities of official teaching," says that "Sérusier proved to us through Hegel ... that logically, philosophically Gauguin was right."⁴⁹

In his discussion of the creative process, Sérusier seems deeply concerned about the derivation of the work of art; that is, the extent to which the painting derives from direct observation of nature, and the extent to which it is composed of the painter's ideas. He explains that although the artist works from nature, nature is necessarily simplified in being adapted to a surface plane—the canvas. It is

modified further by notions previously acquired and retained in the memory, by personal feelings toward the object, and by the psychological state of the painter. All these coefficients work upon the sensation to the point of transforming it, and a 'mental image' is produced. This concern with the derivation of the work of art is typical of the Symbolists. It is reflected in their differentiation of 'subjective deformation' from 'objective deformation,' first mentioned by Denis in an essay of 1895.⁵⁰

Sérusier, in his *A. B. C. de la Peinture*, continues that style is a product of the mind, determined by individual taste, time, place, cultural heritage, and also by the 'fundamental laws of art.' This concern with fundamental laws in art is characteristic of the Symbolists. Charles Morice, a Symbolist and favorite disciple of Verlaine and Mallarmé, writing about Gauguin, said that there are fundamental laws common to all the arts and that these laws were known to the primitives.⁵¹ Another Symbolist who wrote on painting, Albert Aurier, declared that his criterion for the accuracy of his aesthetic arguments was that they led back to the formula of simple, spontaneous, and primordial art which he considered the true and absolute art.⁵² Sérusier, similarly, wrote that these fundamental laws of art are manifested most clearly in the primitives. He says they are known to all men at birth, but bad education soon obscures this knowledge. Only through abstraction and generalization can it be rediscovered.

Whatever he may have meant by abstraction and generalization, Sérusier sought for fundamental laws of art through the study of color harmonies and through the study of ideal proportions as determined by numerology, though with the sincerest desire to be objective and scientific in his method.⁵³ His great concern was for the discovery of workable formulas through which 'beauty' or 'harmony' (interchangeable terms to him) could be achieved. He says, 'There may exist an absolute beauty, but it is accessible only to perfect beings. Beings mean as

we are can aspire to beauty only through style.' From this statement it is evident that Sérusier was a Neo-Platonist and that through this philosophy he concentrated his efforts upon method. It is clear, then, why he seemed to copy Gauguin impersonally. As a *revolté* from naturalism, he plunged immediately into the search for new formulas to remedy a weak technical situation and never really painted to express himself.

In the respect that his methods are those of a mystic, Sérusier is like the other theorists of the Symbolist school. But in his detailed formulation of method, he resembles the neo-Impressionists. Whereas his Symbolist associates undertook no such specific means of arriving at basic principles, the Neo-Impressionists definitely did so. Seurat worked on theories of color, line, and proportion, seeking, like Sérusier, artistic perfection through scientific determination of the form.

Emile Bernard's first extensive writings on the subject of esthetic theory came in 1893 after he had left France for a prolonged retirement in the Near East.

During the years 1888-92, Bernard had admired simplified, decorative forms and 'primitive' art, especially Giotto, the Byzantines, the tapestries and stained glass of Epinal, and Breton peasant art. Such art, he believed, proved the inefficacy of science, because without science, primitive man was superior to modern man. Bernard believed, as did Sérusier, that modern man could not see the light (absolute beauty) because of his false education, because he had been taught to call appearances realities.

By 1893 when his essay, 'A Tâtons,' was published, Bernard had combined the Symbolist theory of equivalents with Neo-Platonic philosophy.⁵⁴ To the belief prevalent among the Symbolists, that nature as it appears to the eye is imperfect as art, he added belief in an absolute beauty for which the earthly equivalents are symbols. These symbols,

he says, are more real than earthly appearances.

Although he stated that man must rely upon God to explain the harmonies of nature, being too infirm to find them for himself, he soon followed the path of Sérusier in looking for a method more practical than reliance upon God or intuition alone.⁵⁵ He concluded by 1895 that art demands learning as well as instinct since, he said, the Byzantines and Giotto were really very learned, but seem naive only in the light of modern science.⁵⁶ It is not too surprising, then, that Bernard turned to the study of anatomy, modeling, and chiaroscuro and to Renaissance painters as models.

Denis, too, turned back to academic methods. By 1896, he was advocating the use of the posed model so that form would not be sacrificed;⁵⁷ thus paralleling Bernard's study of anatomy, modeling, and chiaroscuro and Sérusier's post-Symbolist studies in the style of the Neo-Impressionists. As early as 1890, Denis suggested by his title 'Définition du Néo-traditionnisme' that he considered Symbolism a return to tradition. At that time, he too admired Byzantine art, medieval stained glass, and Breton calvaries. But Denis progressively rechosed his precedents. His likings changed to Early Renaissance art, especially Fra Angelico; then, by 1896, Greek and Roman art and Poussin seemed greatest; by 1901, his god was Ingres; and after that, Cézanne.⁵⁸

Among this group of French painters, not one persisted in following Gauguin's style and his teachings. As *revoltés* they found in him a leader who was personally stimulating, whose suggestions were simple, practical, and novel, and whose challenge to established ideas and conservative respectability intrigued them. None were great painters but their work as a group under Gauguin's immediate impetus is highly interesting in its revolutionary style and theoretical aspect, and their formulation of Gauguin's teachings is historically important. After he

left, they redefined their aims. They also quickly adopted technical refinements as in the stylized posters of *Art Nouveau* or in their return to established academic methods in painting.⁵⁹ Those who still wanted to express important ideas through equivalents turned to orthodox religious subjects and to conventional symbols. These painters were encouraged by the Rosicrucians (a cult newly revived in France) who hoped for a new manifestation of mysticism or, as they called it, a regeneration in art.⁶⁰ But these were moves away from the Symbolism that was described by Aurier and other Symbolists of the time, and which we describe in this paper.

Symbolism is carried on in twentieth century art in its deliberate distortion of natural objects, in its expression of ideas through equivalent forms, in its choice of themes of peculiarly personal importance, and in its theoretical preoccupation with fundamental truths and with the desirability of anything primitive.

Deliberate distortion of natural objects, while general in all Post-Impressionism, received special emphasis in Symbolist theory. For the Symbolists, it was a virtue in itself in that it revealed those aspects of the natural object which were most essential to the expression of the artist's idea. Furthermore, this distortion, in that it was simplifying and obviously crude, showed that the artist was not trying to make an accurate reproduction of nature. It announced the fact that the inner truth meant more to the artist than the visual appearance, the photographic truth. This self-conscious use of distortion, crudeness, and simplification seems to pervade much of twentieth century art, from the works of such important painters as Matisse down to those of the lowliest art student who believes he has seen the light.

In that the Symbolists expressed ideas through equivalent forms, and that these were 'synthetic' forms combining the intuitively invented with the natural, Symbolism was carried on in the work of Matisse,

particularly in his illustrations. Matisse has illustrated Mallarmé's poems and James Joyce's *Ulysses*.⁶¹ The latter work provides a double illustration of the Symbolist viewpoint carried to an extreme in twentieth century art. Here both author and illustrator have expressed the thought by "synthetic" forms. The author uses the English language but invents new words, new arrangements, and new meanings for words so that his ideas are expressed through personal symbols. Matisse illustrates the text in the manner recommended by Denis, with "an accompaniment of expressive lines," but he abstracts far more than Denis. He, too, expresses the essence of the ideas through "synthetic" forms, invented but based recognizably upon nature.

The Symbolists' choice of themes of peculiarly personal importance is also carried on in later painting. In Bernard's *Vision* (fig. 10), Gauguin's *Soyez amoureuses, vous serez heureuses* (fig. 17) and his *La lutte de Jacob avec l'ange* (fig. 1), we find the expression of ideas which are not only extremely personal but also psychologically profound. While such themes do not appear in all of Symbolist painting, their importance cannot be minimized, especially in view of the unstinted emphasis upon them by Symbolist writers, who knew of the subconscious through Poe and Baudelaire. Today the Surrealists, with greater sophistication and more sharply defined purpose, have carried on this tendency, and again the later painters have gone to a new extreme.

In that the Symbolists were preoccupied with what they considered to be "fundamental truths" and through that preoccupation, believed in the desirability of primitive art and primitive life, they foreshadowed the theoretical approach of later artists, particularly of the Fauves and the German Expressionists. These painters believed with the Symbolists that fundamental truths of art exist and can be expressed by simple, basic art forms which must somehow be rediscovered for modern, civilized man. While the Cubists too shared this belief, their method for arriving at fundamentals was, unlike that of the

Symbolists, Fauves, and Expressionists, intellectual rather than intuitive. The Symbolists and their followers on the other hand believed that the intuitive method itself was primitive and fundamental.

The Symbolists' belief that fundamental truths of art are known to primitives, and at birth to all men⁶³ also laid the foundation for the extravagant admiration of primitive art in the twentieth century and for such paintings as Picasso's in 1906. Serious studies of the art of children and of untutored adults, and the belief in the detrimental effect of educating the artist also had their root in this belief.

While Gauguin inspired this 'primitivism' in his followers, and while his own work had its direct effect upon later painting, it was the contribution of the theorists of the group to voice the philosophy which came to dominate much of twentieth century art.⁶⁴ This philosophy has been aptly called 'primitivistic' and is described as:

"the assumption that externals, whether those of a social or cultural group, of individual psychology or of the physical world, are intricate and complicated and as such not *desirable* that any reaching under the surface, if only it is carried far enough and proceeds according to the proper method, will reveal something 'simple' and basic which because of its very fundamentality and simplicity will be more emotionally compelling than the superficial variations of the surface; and finally that the qualities of simplicity and basicness are things to be valued in and for themselves. In other words it is the assumption that the further one goes back — historically, psychologically, or aesthetically — the simpler things become; and that because they are simpler they are more interesting, more important, and more valuable."⁶⁵

- * I am indebted to Dr. Meyer Schapiro, under whom this study was originally prepared, and to Dr. Robert J. Goldwater for his help and encouragement.
1. There was influence from Cézanne's work upon the Symbolists (see notes 6 and 32), though none of them was personally acquainted with him. Several of the Symbolists, particularly Bernard, knew van Gogh who, however, remained away after 1888 and had much less influence upon them than did Gauguin.
 2. Already in 1886 Gauguin was painting in a heavy Impressionistic manner which showed that naturalistic light effects were no longer his main concern. His taste for pure decoration was evidenced in that year by his fish ceramic, but in painting he had not yet developed his bold decorative style of 1888 and later.
 3. Cf. *infra*. pp. 121-122.
 4. This style is claimed by Bernard as his own invention and as his contribution to the style of Gauguin.
 5. On a walking trip into Brittany, Bernard lingered on the beach at Concarneau to watch a painter at work. The man was Emile Schuffenecker, a companion and great admirer of Gauguin. Schuffenecker recommended his pension at Pont-Aven to young Bernard, urging him to go there and to introduce himself to Gauguin. Their brief contact at that time seems, however, to have made little impression on either Gauguin or Bernard. Both were working toward a simplification of natural forms, but it was not until two years later that they recognized this affinity of aim.
 6. He had first seen van Gogh during a visit to the Atelier Cormon where his "strange and wild" painting attracted Bernard's attention.

Their first actual meeting was in the shop of Père Tanguy, a color merchant in the rue Clauzel, where both painters and a number of their friends had been drawn by displays of Cezanne's paintings. The exhibition of the "friends of the rue Clauzel" in 1887 was held in a new restaurant about to open in the rue Clichy. Van Gogh called their group *L'Ecole du Petit-Boulevard*, intending only to contrast it with the painters being shown on the *grands boulevards*. His phrase implies no claim of founding a school, nor even of unanimity of aim.

7. During the winter of 1886-87, just before Gauguin left for his trip to Martinique, van Gogh had made his acquaintance in Paris, where the two painters admired each other's work.
8. Cf. *infra*. note 17.
9. Denis, Maurice, 'L'influence de Paul Gauguin', *Théories 1890-1910, Du Symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique*, 3rd edition, Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Occident, 1913, p. 161. Here translated.
10. *Loc. cit.*
11. *Loc. cit.*
12. *Nabis* is from the Hebrew word meaning prophet.
13. Josephin Péladan led the revival of Rosicrucianism in France about 1890. See note 60.
14. Denis, *loc. cit.*
15. Denis, Maurice, 'De Gauguin et de van Gogh au Classicisme', *L'Occident*, May 1909. Reprinted in *Théories 1890-1910*, p. 262. Here translated.

16. In the entresol of the Maison Boussod et Valadon, Boulevard Montmartre, which was directed by Théodore van Gogh. Gauguin filled two small rooms with paintings and pottery. The show was held in the fall of 1888, about the time Gauguin left for his visit to van Gogh in Arles.
17. The exhibition was described in this way in the catalogue. This seems to be the first official appearance of the title *Synthétiste*. After 1889 it was used frequently in reference to the group better known as Symbolists. *Impressioniste* was used in conjunction with it probably because at that time its popular connotation was any modern painting that was not academic.
18. In this show, Emile Bernard used the pseudonym Ludovico Nemo as well as his own name. (Bernard's literary pseudonym was Jean Dorsal). Regarding other painters mentioned here, little is known about Roy, Foché, or Daniel. A very interesting sketch (belonging to a sketchbook in the Louvre collection) done by Roy in the Symbolist manner is reproduced in *L'Amour de l'Art*, April, 1938, p. 134.
19. M. Denis, in an article published in 1895 (reprinted, *Théories 1890-1910*, p. 20), speaks of "those painters called successively *Cloisonnistes* (Dujardin, *Revue indépendante*, 1886), *Synthétistes* (1889), *Néo-traditionnistes* (Pierre Louys, *Art et Critique*, 1890), *Idéistes* (Aurier, *A. Mercure*, 1891), *Symbolistes* and *Déformateurs* (Germain, A.) ...". Pierre Louys is a pseudonym of Denis'. Gauguin, Bernard, and Schuffenecker seem to have scorned the term Synthetist as a serious label, to judge by the sketch *Un cauchemar* (fig. 5) probably done about 1889. Gauguin, however, disliked any label or classification for his work.
20. In the summer of 1889 Gauguin moved from Pont-Aven to the nearby town of Pouldu, which then continued to be his headquarters in Brittany.

21. Bernard's penchant for letter writing kept him in touch with van Gogh as well, and, later on, with Paul Cezanne.
22. Whereas Bernard and Gauguin were on the friendliest terms from 1888 until the fall of 1890, the events of the ensuing year led to great jealousy and resentment on the part of Bernard. The Café Volpini show, dominated by Gauguin's work, had led observers to consider Gauguin the master and all the others his pupils. This is understandable since Gauguin had exhibited before and had already been noticed by a number of critics. Besides, he was nearly a generation older than the younger men who participated in the show. There is little doubt that Gauguin really did dominate the group; but inasmuch as Bernard and Gauguin had worked out the Synthetist style together, Bernard's resentment was not without foundation. But that Gauguin, who had none of Bernard's interest in literature and philosophy, should be fêted by a group of intellectuals was another thorn in Bernard's side. The climax came when Albert Aurier's eulogy of Gauguin in an article entitled 'Le Symbolisme en peinture, Paul Gauguin' was published. Bernard felt that Aurier more than anyone else should acknowledge his importance as an originator of Symbolisme, for Aurier had seen Bernard's work at St. Briac in 1888 before his association with Gauguin. Feeling that he was considered a plagiarist, Bernard took up the pen in his own defense. There followed a long series of articles which, though useful as historical documents, do little to advance Bernard's claim to fame equalling that of Gauguin.
23. The Symbolist school of poetry began about 1885.
24. Maurice Denis, one of the *Nabis*, was already familiar with the *littérateurs*; Lugné-Poë had introduced him to Adolphe Retté through whose intermediation Denis' first article, 'Définition du Néo-traditionnisme' (see note 42), was published. Emile Bernard was

acquainted with Aurier as early as 1888; and Charles Morice met Gauguin and his friends at Pouldu in 1889. According to Jean de Rotonchamp (*Paul Gauguin*, Paris: G. Crès et cie., 1925, p. 78), young painters and personal friends of Gauguin as well as the Symbolist writers were present at the farewell banquet given for Gauguin by the literary group just before his departure for Tahiti in April, 1891.

25. Bernard, Emile, 'Notes sur l'école dite de Pont-Aven', *Mercur de France*, XLVIII (Dec. 1903) pp. 675-682.
26. Aurier, Albert, 'Le Symbolisme en peinture, Paul Gauguin', *Mercur de France*, Mar. 1891, p. 158. Here translated. Aurier pointedly distinguishes between idea-ist and idealist.
27. During the period 1890-1, Gauguin attended the meetings of the Symbolist poets at the Café Voltaire, and occasionally Mallarmé's Tuesdays. The story is told that as Sérusier walked home with him after one of these gatherings, Gauguin remarked that he had understood nothing of what went on (Rey, Robert, *La Renaissance du Sentiment Classique*, Paris: G. van Oest, 1931, p. 68). Furthermore, Gauguin's own accounts of these occasions imply boredom on his part: "We dine; there are toasts. The chairman speaks first, Moréas replies. Clovis Hugues, plethoric, long-haired, and highfalutin', makes a long speech, of course, inverse. Barrès, tall, thin, and bald, quotes Baudelaire, dryly and in prose. We listen. The marble gives one a chill." (Quoted by Pola Gauguin in *My Father, Paul Gauguin*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937, p. 253, from the original manuscript of *Noa-Noa*).
28. Rotonchamp, Jean de, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-2. Here translated. A drawing entitled *La fille au chien* (Octave Mirbeau collection; Sale Galerie Durand-Ruel, Paris, Feb. 4, 1919) is undoubtedly a sketch for this destroyed painting.

29. That Gauguin could use conventional symbols with freshness and wit, when not too serious about it, is charmingly illustrated by his *Leda and the swan* (1889), a sketch for a plate, on which is written "honnis soit qui mal y pense" (*sic.*). For reproduction see Chassé, Charles, *Gauguin et le Groupe de Pont-Aven*, Paris: H. Floury, 1921, p. 90.
30. Aurier, too, expressed a distinction between the terms Synthetism and Symbolism, Aurier *op.cit.*, p. 162.
31. Notably by Maurice Denis, who called the movement Néo-traditionnisme in 1890 (see note 42), and who claimed that classicism was implicit in Synthetist and Symbolist doctrine in his article 'De Gauguin et de van Gogh au classicisme', *Théories 1890-1910*, p. 274. Also, Robert Rey makes a similar claim in his book, fully entitled *La Renaissance du Sentiment Classique dans la peinture française à la fin du XIXe siècle: Degas -- Renoir -- Gauguin -- Cézanne -- Seurat*.
32. While this painting shows some stylistic influence from Cézanne's work (Bernard admired that master from as early as 1887), it is also close to Gauguin's painting. The subject seems decidedly atypical of Synthetist painting, and again influenced by Cézanne. At this date, however, Bernard painted mainly religious subjects and peasants in landscapes like those of Gauguin.
33. Jourdain, Francis, 'Notes sur le peintre Emile Bernard', *La Plume*, V (Sept. 15, 1893), pp. 390-7.
34. A wave of religious mysticism swept through the Symbolist group about this time. Mystics had thrived within its ranks since the beginning, but after 1891, there were sweeping revivals in Catholicism, particularly Thomism, and in Rosicrucianism, which deeply affected many of the Symbolists.

35. Ibels' posters reproduced in *La Plume*, vol. V, are representative of the best advertising art of the decade.
36. *L'Intruse* was presented for the first time in Paris at a benefit given for Gauguin and Verlaine in July, 1891, at the Théâtre d'Art.
37. Denis, Maurice, 'Définition du Neo-traditionnisme', *Théories 1890-1910*, chapter I, section XXI. Here translated.
38. "'Ecoutez la chanson bien douce . . .'" from the collection of Verlaine's poetry entitled *Sagesse*, Paris: Messein, 1913, first published in 1881. Quoted in part. Séguin was a latecomer to the Symbolist group, yet he belonged with the Pont-Aven generation. He met Bernard in 1893, and in 1894 he painted with Gauguin who had returned briefly from his first stay in Tahiti. They painted together at Pouldu during the summer and Séguin did Breton peasants in landscapes just as Gauguin and his companions had done in 1889.
39. Exhibition of the work of Armand Séguin, Feb. 1, 1895, at the gallery of Le Barc de Boutteville, 47 rue le Peletier, Paris.
40. Gauguin, Paul, 'Armand Séguin', *Mercur de France*, XIII (Feb., 1895), pp. 222-4. Here translated.
41. *Loc. cit.*
42. First published in *Art et Critique*, Aug. 23 and 30, 1890, under the pseudonym Pierre-Louis. Reprinted in *Théories 1890-1910*, pp. 1-13.
43. Denis, 'Définition du Néo-traditionnisme', *Théories 1890-1910*, Chapter I, section I. Here translated.
44. *Ibid.*, section VIII.

45. *Ibid.*, section XIII.
46. *Ibid.*, section XX.
47. *Ibid.*, section IX.
48. Paris: 1891. The following discussion of Sérusier's theories is based upon this work.
49. Denis, *Théories 1890-1910*, p. 164.
50. Denis, 'A propos de l'exposition de Armand Séguin', (Mar., 1895), reprinted in *Théories 1890-1910*. The term subjective deformation had been used by Jean Moréas, the poet, in his Symbolist *Manifesto* nine years earlier.
51. Morice, Charles, 'Paul Gauguin', *Mercur de France*, Dec., 1893, pp. 295-300, *passim*.
52. Aurier, *op.cit.*, p. 162.
53. A pupil of Sérusier's, Jan Verkade, interested him in the aesthetic theories of the Benedictine, Père Didier. See note 54.
54. 'A Tâtons', *Mercur de France*, XII (Nov., 1894), p. 224ff. An essay showing the combined influences of Neo-Platonic thought and Catholic doctrines. About 1891 a wave of religious conversions invaded the Symbolist group. While Bernard, always a staunch Catholic, began to attend the meetings of a certain *Société Théosophique*, Filiger became interested in Rosicrucianism, Verkade became a Benedictine monk at the monastery of Beuron in Hohenzollern, and several of the *Nabis*, including Denis, frequented the monastery of the Dominicans of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, where the Père Janvier, a young and eloquent Thomist, taught them Christian dogma. See note 60.

55. The Symbolists' belief in feeling or intuition as the basic means for discovering aesthetic truths is paralleled in Henri Bergson's *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 16th edition, Paris: Librairies Félix Alcan et Guillaumin Réunies, 1908. First published in 1889.
56. Bernard, Emile, 'De l'art naïf et de l'art savant', *Mercure de France*, XIV (Apr., 1895), pp. 86-91. Here translated.
57. Painting directly from posed models was not acceptable to Gauguin in his teachings at Pont-Aven (see Chassé, Charles, 'Gauguin et Mallarmé', *L'Armour de l'Art*, 1922), nor to Sérusier according to his statements in *A. B. C. de la Peinture*.
58. The Symbolist painters' return to tradition was paralleled by a similar movement among the Symbolist poets. Jean Moréas, who wrote the manifesto of Symbolism in 1886 ('Le Symbolisme; Manifeste de Jean Moreas', *Figaro*, Sept. 18, 1886) moderated his use of free verse by 1891 (*Le Pèlerin passionné*) and became the founder of a new school of admirers of the theory of Pierre de Ronsard. This new school was called *l'école romane*.
59. Denis writes: 'At the exhibitions of Le Barc de Boutteville from the end of 1891, the flat colors no longer appeared with such boldness, the forms were no longer set within black outlines, the exclusive use of pure color was no more. That is explained, I imagine, by the almost complete withdrawal of Bernard and Gauguin, by Anquetin's evolution toward modeling, and by the attitude of several new-comers toward more sentimental experiments and more refined processes.' ('A propos de l'exposition de Armand Séguin', *Théories 1890-1910*, pp. 20-23).

60. See notes 13 and 54. Reference: Maseux, E., 'La Rose et Croix', *La Plume*, Nov. 15, 1891, pp. 409-410. Denis claimed that the Rose-Croix was viewed with suspicion by the Symbolists in spite of the fact that they exhibited at that gallery.
61. Mallarmé, Stéphane, *Poésies*, Lausanne: Albert Skira, 1932.
62. Joyce, James, *Ulysses*, New York: the Limited Editions Club, 1935.
63. This idea was upheld at length by Adolphe Retté in 'Le vers libre', *Mercur de France*, VIII, pp. 203-210.
64. It must be noted that after Gauguin's departure, Bernard and Denis turned from the 'primitivist' attitude inspired by Gauguin to an earlier nineteenth century kind of archaism in which the Golden Age variety of simplicity and beauty inspired them. Since they had never known really primitive art, but only knew what it must be like, this archaism probably colored their views from the start. In the new phase (and this, too, was brief) a simple but civilized life and art became their ideal rather than a simple and uncivilized life and art.
65. Goldwater, Robert J., *Primitivism in Modern Painting*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938, p. 172.

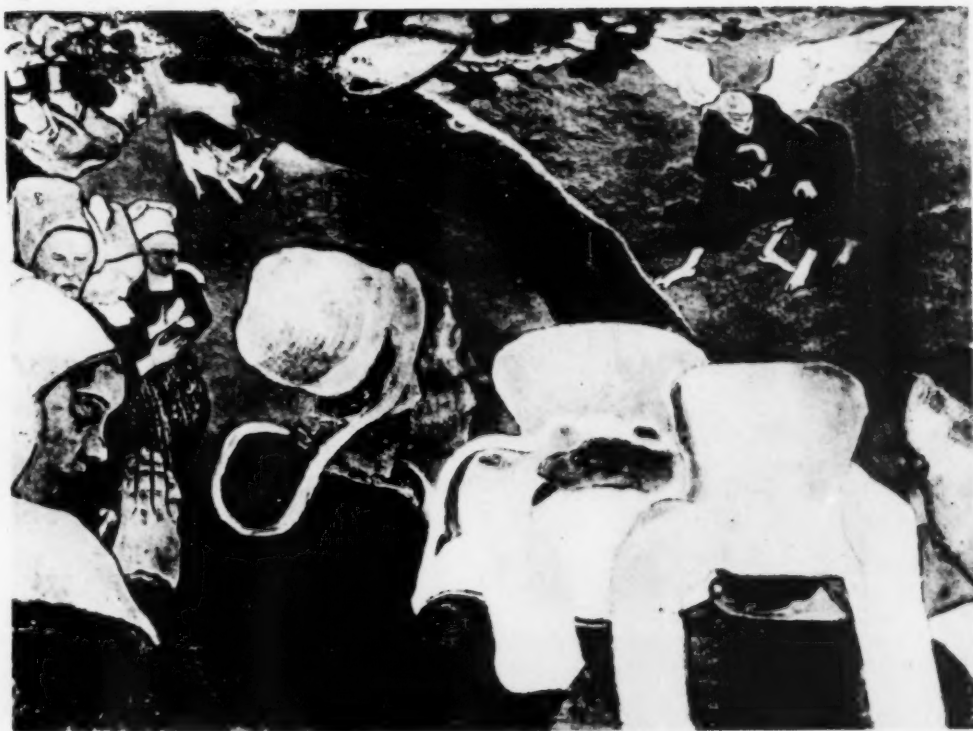


Fig. 1. Gauguin, *La lutte de Jacob avec l'ange*, Edinburgh, National Gallery.



Fig. 2. Gauguin, *Ma Grand'mère*.

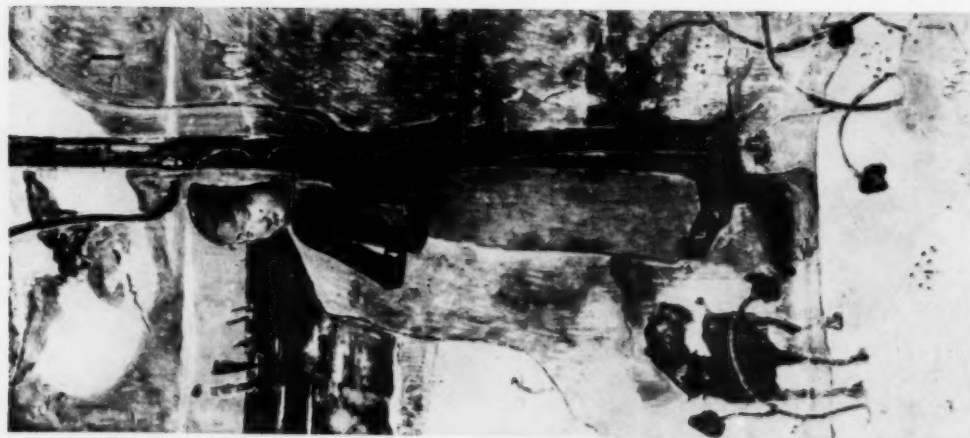


Fig. 4. Gauguin, *Jeanne d'Arc*, fresco, Paris, Private collection.

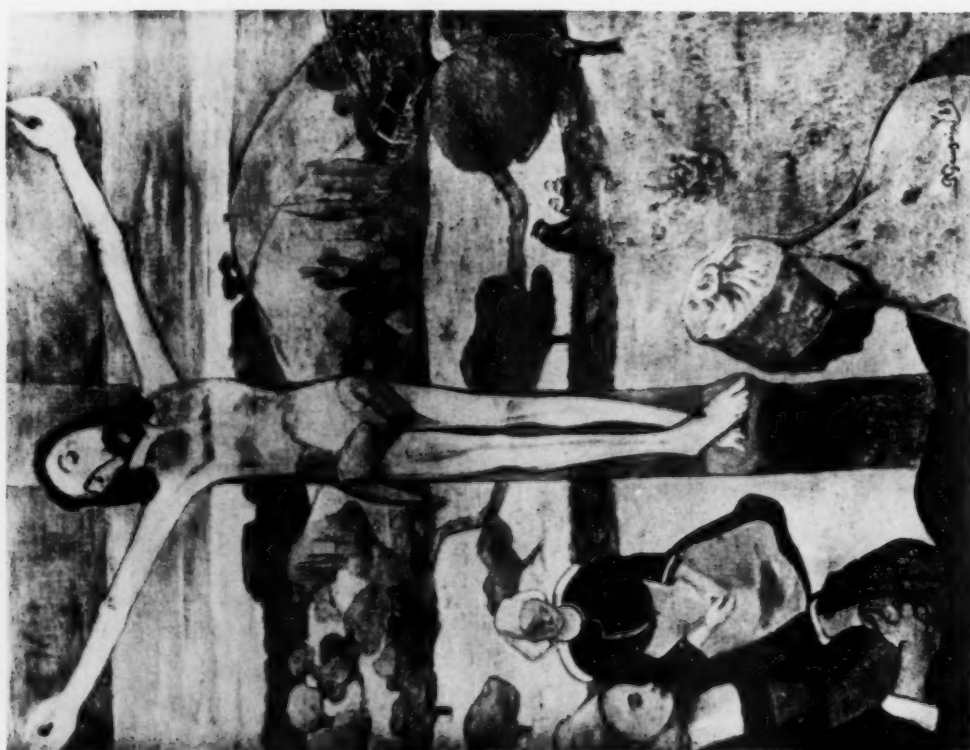


Fig. 3. Gauguin, *Christ Jaune*, Paul Rosenberg and Co.

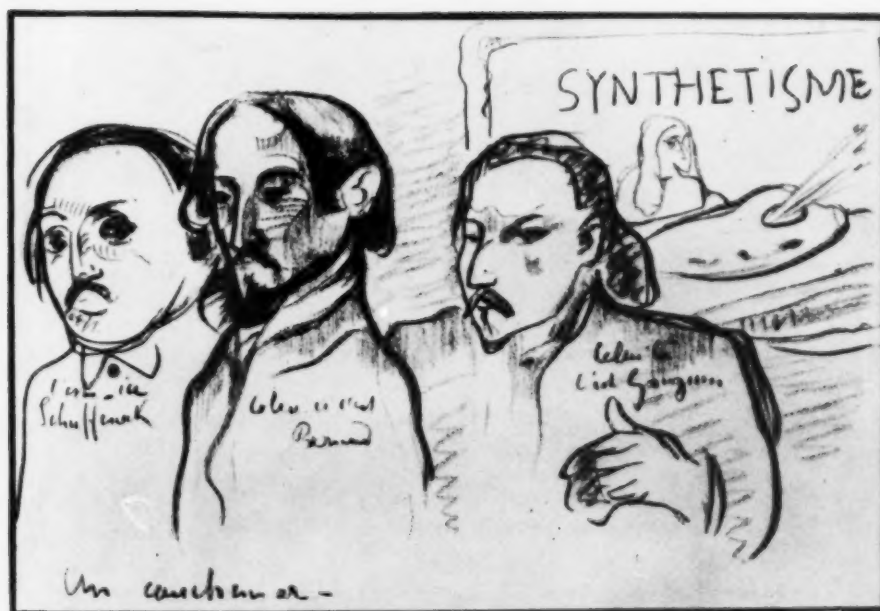


Fig. 5. Gauguin (attributed to), *Un cauchmar*.



Fig. 6. Bernard, *Paysanne dans les champs*.



Fig. 7. Gauguin, Jean Moréas, Lithograph.



Fig. 8. Gauguin, Stéphane Mallarmé, Etching.

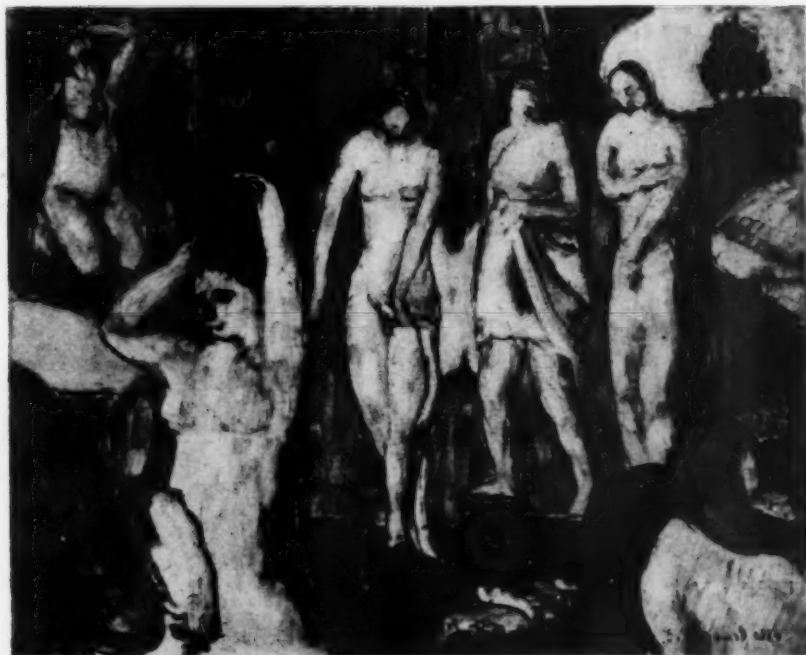


Fig. 9. Bernard, *Baigneuses*, Vollard collection.



Fig. 10. Bernard, *Vision*.



Fig. 11. Bernard, *Drawing*.



Fig. 12. Gauguin, *Calvaire Breton*.



Fig. 13. Serusier, *Le Bois d'Amour, à Pont-Aven*.

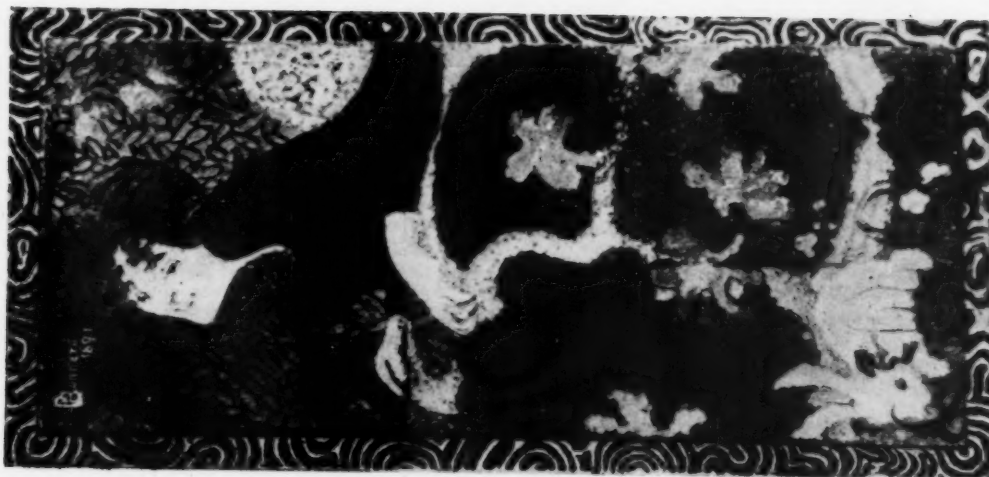


Fig. 15. Bonnard, *Femme assise au lapin*.



Fig. 14. Denis, *L'Intruse*.



Fig. 16. Séguin, *Ecoutez la chanson bien douce . . .*



Fig. 17. Gauguin, *Soyez amoureuses vous serez heureuses*, wood.

Cover and Title Page

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